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THE MYSTERIES OF GRACE

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BY THE REV.
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TO

THE REV. W. L. WATKINSON

IN RECOGNITION OF LONG
AND HIGHLY VALUED FRIENDSHIP
AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF
MUCH INSPIRATION RECEIVED FROM
THE CONSECRATED GENIUS OF
HIS VOICE AND PEN

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I

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.—Mark i. 1.

MARK, terse of utterance and straight of hand, begins his record with the public ministry of Jesus. He is silent concerning the preparatory stages of the Saviour's childhood and boyhood and younger manhood, and calls attention to the great figure of the Son of Man as He is in the act of revealing Himself to the people. He is concerned with the clear self-revelation of the Christ in the "perfect day" of His Messianic consciousness and power, with the clear-cut portrait of His Messianic glory in His public ministry. He allows the dim twilight of the vision of the Child Jesus to grow into the full morning of the revealed Son of Man, and gives us our first view of Him in the full light of day. He desires to impress us at once with the complete shining of His glory.

It is by no means necessary for us to decide the critical question as to the order in which the gospels were originally composed, in order to perceive that in the order of thought and philosophical arrangement Mark is the natural sequel to Matthew.

This order we hold to be more important than any merely chronological order which criticism may ultimately discover, for it has vital movement in it. Matthew has narrated the supernatural birth of Jesus, and shown that His origin was not along the beaten tracks of human birth, but along a new and marvellous way heralded by angels and mediated by the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit. A new thing had happened on the earth. A pure and holy virgin had conceived and borne a Son, and the wondrous Child thus born into the world was to be called Holy, the Son of God. With this unique title of Son of God Mark strikes into his great and vivid record. It is his part to show forth a Life accordant with the mystery and marvel of such a birth, to show that He who was called Son of God by the angel proved Himself to be the Son of God by the energies and splendours of His ministering life. Matthew's narrative of the birth demands such a record of the life of the Son of Man, and this record which Mark gives is the natural and appropriate sequel to the startling account of the honour which the blessed Virgin bore through the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost.

The wonderfulness and uniqueness of this new Life which had appeared on the earth is not less emphasised in Mark's human records than it is in the idyllic charm of Matthew's marvellous

narrative of the virgin birth of our Lord. As in the birth, so in the life, He is the Son of God. As in His birth He is essentially distinguished from all who come into the world, so in His life He is equally distinguished from all who live and act in the world. As in the announcement of the birth, so in the announcement of the life, there comes out of heaven the voice of good tidings to men. The birth was good tidings of great joy; the life was the beginning of the good tidings of the Son of God. In each case there is the suggestive intimation of the close of an old era, and the beginning of a new epoch for the world of humanity. A new and unique impact is given by heaven to the earth from the one standpoint as from the other. The angels sang the advent of a new era of "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill toward men." Mark is also concerned with a new beginning, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This uniqueness of the Christ is the common centre of all the teaching of the New Testament. This is the central mystery of grace from which all the teaching of the evangel of grace must take its start and find its essential meanings. From this centre we reverently start in our present meditations.

I. Our attention is first called to the unique nature of the Author of Christianity. "The Son of God."

The term, "Son of God," as applied to Christ, will be found on close attention to imply, that Jesus as Man was begotten of God. In our introductory remarks we have already borrowed from Luke to bring out into clearer signification the briefer narrative of the Saviour's birth as given by Matthew. The latter does not use the actual title, Son of God, in that connection, but gives, for all that, the content of the term in other words. The angel visitant says to Joseph: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." With equal significance Matthew quotes the words, "Behold, the Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us." The "God with us" is clearly equivalent to, "shall be called holy, the Son of God."

In Luke's narrative of the Birth, the title, Son of God, is clearly related to His supernatural birth. It was because He was born, not of man, but of the Holy Ghost, that He is described by the angel in the words, "Wherefore also the Holy thing which is to be born shall be called the Son of God." It is not within our province in this discourse to discuss the relation of this earthly Sonship to the eternal glory of the Logos, or to the creative energy of the "Prototokos," the Firstborn of Creation. It is clear that the earthly Sonship involves some previous transcendently

glorious relation of an essentially analogous kind. He came out of the Divine Life into the earth because He was in the Divine Life in eternity. He came from the bosom of the Father because He had ever been in the Father's bosom. His earthly procession from God was the shadow of His eternal procession from the same Divine Essence. He was God's only begotten Son (*Ho monogenes Huios*) into the world of men and time, because He was the First-born (*Prototokos*) of the Divine Life from eternity.

In the New Testament, however, His eternal place in the life of the Father is built up for faith and thought out of His manifest Sonship as man. It is the God that shines in His humanity that reveals that He is " from the bosom of the Father." He is shown to be from God by the glory of His human life. Men beheld His glory, " glory as of the only begotten from the Father," and then it became clear that the " Word, who was with God, yea, and was God, had become flesh and dwelt among men." For the evidence of faith, it is not the doctrine of His eternal glory, nor is it the narrative of His supernatural birth, that comes first. The first convincing light is in the Divine glory which shines in His humanity. When this is seen, all the rest follows. It is clear that He came into the world not through its common fountains, and that the Divinity of His spirit was

a beam from the eternal glory of the Life of God. The human " Son of God " was an emanation out of the being of God, Immanuel, God with us.

Mark's first words, therefore, when rightly understood, imply the supernatural birth of Jesus. They are to be taken simply, and therefore profoundly. Jesus was the Son of God, just as simply and directly as Simon was the son of Jonas. Let the evangelists be read simply, and it will be seen that they never dreamt of any circumlocutory or evasive interpretation. He was the Son of God in the simple, yet awful, sense that God, and God alone, was His Father. Subtle evasions of this simple and honest meaning belong to later days. For the evangelists the title had no reservations and no qualifications. When Jesus spoke of God as His Father, the Jews had no doubt as to His meaning. They said, " He called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." He never acknowledged any father, save God, while freely acknowledging mother and sister and brother. In Him the supernatural and the natural had been reconciled. He became flesh, and tabernacled among men, but He was also the Only begotten Son from the bosom of the Father. There is but one manner of birth that is simply and obviously consistent with this simply evident meaning of the name, Son of God. And this is the manner of such a birth:

"And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore also the Holy thing that is to be born shall be called the Son of God.'"

Jesus Christ is, therefore, the perfect expression in humanity, and for man, of the life of God. In every other direction the image of God has been blurred and broken for men. The heavens declare His glory, but only amid such uncertain shadows that many have lost their way bewildered among them. God's self-manifestation in the history of our race is blurred and broken to our imperfect and defective vision. The Divine image in our own hearts is darkened and distorted by sin. The genuine and true likeness of God was hidden from humanity, because the dark veil of our sinful nature would not let the glory through. But Jesus not only let the brightness of God's life through the veil of humanity; He made humanity itself the very warp and tissue of the Divine glory. The Word became flesh, in order to dwell among men. He made His human nature the vital expression of the life Divine, the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very impress of His person. His human soul gave forth the pure activity of the heart of God. His human personality was Immanuel, God with us. The Son of God was revealed as the Son of Man.

Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is the perfect expression to men of the truth of God. Since He is the life of God, He is also the truth. In this connection again it is quite unnecessary to discuss the critical questions concerning the "kenosis," and any voluntary self-limitations involved in His incarnation. We need not trouble about our Saviour's human relations to the fragmentary fields of science, seeing that His business with us, and ours with Him, belong to a domain which immeasurably transcends these. Are we sure of the supreme thing which He came with glorious credentials to supply? There is no uncertainty or limitation in His own claims in this transcendent sphere. He and the Father are one. No man hath seen God at any time; the Only begotten Son from the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. He claimed to give the very truth of the life of God as One who knew it by sharing it, so that His word was complete and final. Though heaven and earth passed away, His word could not fail. He did not philosophise and excogitate religious ideas. He spoke directly out of the immediate knowledge of His own Divine life. This is why He cannot be superseded, and all attempts to improve upon His teaching must prove themselves sooner or later to be false. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Other teachers come and go. But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of the love of God. When we say that God is love, we can only prove it in Jesus Christ. Elsewhere God's love is veiled in clouds. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. When we look for His love in creation, we see that creation groaning and travailing in pain, and make our very music moan concerning "Nature red in tooth and claw." When we turn to our own lives, we are everywhere confronted with the mystery of sorrow and pain. We cry out for a God of love, and get in response only the rumblings of a storm which seems to mar the music of the spheres. But in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the heart of the Father is made sacredly bare to our joyful sight. Here God descends through all obscuring shadows, and puts on the vesture of perfect sacrificial love. Here sorrow and pain become the very temple, yea, the very weft of love, and the travailing soul of the Son of God sheds holy light upon the travailing and groaning heart of creation. We see the secret of the eternal love in His wounded side and hands and feet, and fall at His feet crying, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the complete expression of God's union and fellowship with men. In Him God reconciled the world unto Himself. Sin had set itself up in the temple of God in

the human spirit, and God re-enters that temple in His incarnate Son. This is incredible only to those who do not realise the terrible and cosmic power of sin. Such immanence of God as could raise man into moral perfectness had been negatived by the triumph of evil, save His redemptive immanence through the sacrificial might of the Son of God. It is the God of redemption that retains the throne of the human spirit, and not the God of creation and natural evolution. God triumphs in the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, and came in the fullness of time to pour the blood of His sacrifice through the polluted channels of time. Thus in Christ, and in Christ only, we are at one with God again. Hence Jesus says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." The Father is immanent in us through grace, in the unique presence and indwelling of the reconciling Son.

II. Correspondent with the unique nature of the Author of Christianity is the unique message of Christianity. "The good tidings."

Such a coming of the Son of God evidently brought with it a message of joy for the spiritual nature of man. It was good tidings in the highest. Other good tidings there might be of varying measures and degrees, but this was *the* good tidings *par excellence*, good tidings for man in respect

of his immortal and eternal interest. If God has set eternity in the heart of man, these good tidings are the highest note of music possible for human life. The world's deepest needs and longings were now to be satisfied in the advent of the Son of God.

This good news involved the full revelation and assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Man's chief dread and central moral problem were concerned with the forgiveness of sin. The depth and intensity of this problem is well shown by the passionate cries for mercy and pardon which flow through the book of Psalms. A gleam of hope came to men through the symbolism of ancient sacrifices, coupled with a hope in the merciful nature of God. But both the perception and assurance of forgiveness were imperfect, and fear still trod on the heels of sin. Thus moral buoyancy and progress were impeded, for men cannot rise to a great moral height until they have known the enfranchisement of Divine forgiveness. But in Christ we clearly see "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." And we depart in peace, knowing of a certainty that our sins, however many and great, are all forgiven us.

This good news also involved the assurance of new moral and spiritual life in the Son of God. The holy law which had deepened the consciousness of sin had also quickened the consciousness of moral impotency. The law in the members,

warring against the law of the mind, brought men into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members. Men fell back from their ideals in despair, and cried like Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" To such the incarnate Son of God came, saying, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." The redeeming God becomes new life to the dead, and the sons of the resurrection cry, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new."

This good news included new and eternal honour by kinship with the Son of God. This glorious news could even then be only gradually revealed, nay, we only understand it dimly even yet. Men in old days had joy in being just bond-servants of God and devotees of sacred duty. But Christ struck new chords of relationship that were beyond the romance of dreams. Precious as His words were, "Henceforth I call you not bond-servants, but friends," perhaps it was more in His deeds than in His words He made the sweet and wonderful revelation of His oneness with His own. When He allowed John to lean upon His breast, and when He asked His disciples to

watch with Him, He taught them their dear union with Him as no words could do. The New Testament writers are nearly overwhelmed in trying to express the golden and all but incredible message. "We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Still the angels sing, "We bring you good tidings of great joy."

III. From the unique message of Christianity follows the unique era of Christianity. "*The beginning* of the good tidings."

The evangelist sees the world of humanity making a new start. Just as in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, so here is the beginning of a new creation of humanity in the Son of God. The coming of Jesus dwarfed the days that were, closed a chapter in history, and opened a new and incomparably greater one. It is a true instinct which has made men redate the calendar from the time of His coming into the world.

The greatest hopes of the past had been set upon His coming, and that past would have been meaningless if He had not come. When holy men spake darkly of the purpose of God in humanity, in the travail of their darkness loomed the day of the Son of God. The past was full

of luminous shadows gleaming onwards towards the glory of His appearing. The whole of ancient history was but a long and complex preparation for His advent. He brought the kingdom of God for which the nations waited. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad." Moses and all the prophets, and all the world's seers, give way before Him, and He stands alone, the Lord of a new and incomparably glorious day.

It is clear that the reign of the Son of God cannot cease and that He cannot be superseded by anything greater. We may go on to understand His word more fully, and to see His purpose with larger eyes. He may give us more light from His eyes of flame, and lead us into the larger paths of His burning feet. But we cannot go beyond Him. Those who imagine they can go further into truth than He simply wander in the mazes of their own folly. One great teacher may be followed by another that is greater, and new ways of truth may be opened beyond the knowledge of past sages. There may be a greater than Plato, a wiser than Shakespeare. But the Christ can have no rival. He is the end as well as the beginning, the Omega not less than the Alpha. One is our Master for ever, even Christ. To depart from His essential teaching and claims, to invent a new theology which is not His, to

propose a new Christianity in which He is not Lord and God and Saviour, is to rebel against the throne of the eternal King. For He must reign for ever and ever.

He introduced His new era by demonstrating Himself to be the Son of God with power. Mark is about to record works and teaching worthy of the new beginning which he foreshadows. Mighty were His works before men, yet His greatest work was His own sinless soul. Already He foreshadowed His later august declaration, "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." From His exaltation at the Father's side, He swung the old world of Rome into new and amazing beginnings.

In His manifested power and glory we have a guarantee for the future continuance and completion of His kingdom. Mark speaks of the beginning. What the Son of God begins He will surely complete. Mockers may arise, and the world may utter words of sceptical scorn. Yet has God set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. We may well wait patiently for the Son of God. The evangelists proclaimed the beginning of the good tidings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And in the fullness of time the angels will sing, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ." Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him!

II

THE GLORY OF THE INCARNATION

And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us; and we beheld His glory.—JOHN I. 14.

IN these days science, or rather, some scientific men have dimly seen the reasonableness of the great announcement of the incarnation of the Logos, of the Word becoming flesh and for a time tabernacling among men in the fashion of a man. We say dimly because, while appearing to support the Christian doctrine, they really proceed to generalise it out of its unique significance and glory. They give up the old sceptical position in which God was absolutely sundered from man, the Creator completely isolated from the creature. This did service long as a supposed confutation of the possibility of the incarnation of God. God belonged to the category of the Infinite, man to that of the finite, and it was taken for granted that the Infinite and the finite excluded one another. Therefore, it was concluded with Euclidian emphasis, the appearance of the Infinite God in the finite form of man is logically absurd. With what small thoughts and pygmy visions have

men imagined they could overthrow the glorious revelation of the Son of God!

But, as we have intimated, the wise of to-day no longer talk in this blind and foolish way. They have come to realise in some way and measure the immanence of God, and to perceive that He cannot be separated from His creatures by the barriers of wooden syllogisms. But, as is usually the case with the wisdom of this world, its philosophers now show a tendency to fall to the other extreme, and to generalise on the unity of God and man until all essential distinction between them is deleted. We now hear them speak in the same breath of the humanity of God and the divinity of man. There is a vague pantheism in the air in which man cannot be clearly distinguished from God. Man is an evolving Deity, and it is rather difficult to find room for any other. In saying that God is human and humanity is divine, we seem to make things easy for the Incarnation, but we have made them so easy that the Incarnation ceases to have any distinctive character. Every man is God incarnate, and Christ is at the best only *Princeps inter pares*—Chief among His equals.

A deep and balanced view of the relations of God and man will reject both these extremes. Reason in its following of the golden mean is in accord with Scripture in its conception of both

the transcendence and the immanence of the eternal God. God and man are in awful kinship, yet to be for ever profoundly distinguished from one another. God is a Spirit, and into man He has breathed a kindred spirit. Yet for ever is He Creator, and man is but His creature, bearing His likeness, yet not sharing His transcendent essence as Deity. The incarnation of the Son of God belongs to the vital volition of kinship, not to the automatic action of identity. But kinship between the Creator and the creature hangs over measureless abysses, and could realise itself in the incarnation of Deity only by a vast and awful movement of Divine power and grace. He who was in the essential form of God emptied Himself, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. The Word, who was with God and was God, became flesh, and tabernacled among us.

I. It is this awful uniqueness of the incarnation of the eternal Word that gives us the gospel of redemption. In the theory which makes all humanity a form of Divinity, and regards each man or our corporate race as an evolving Deity, there is as little room as there is need for an evangel of redemption. Every man, being Deity incarnate, is his own Saviour. Nay, rather, being incipient God, he needs no Saviour. There can be nothing fundamentally wrong in such a being,

for his feet are firm on the ladder of evolution, and the incidents which men have miscalled sins are but the rungs by which he ascends to his perfected godship. In such an arrangement Christ possesses no transcendent value for the rest of humanity. He is not more necessary than any other man. He is only the most conspicuous figure up to date of a world of human Deities.

How different is the Christ who is the centre of human redemption! Here we are no longer in a region where men are regarded as Deities reaching upward to Divine glories by virtue of their own inherent divinity, and challenging equality with Him who was declared Son of God with power. Here man is, indeed, a wonderful creature, created in the likeness of God, and with high faculties to enjoy fellowship with God for ever. But he is man, and not God. He has fallen, and is not climbing to glory up the natural slopes of evolutionary heights. He is in the throes of sin and failure and death. And God reaches out in His Son the hand of mercy and redemption, and by a marvellous process of transcendent grace re-creates and re-fashions His likeness in the life of fallen humanity. Even in this act of union and reconciliation the eternal difference between God and man is further emphasised, for the Son of God is the omnipotent Redeemer, and man is the creature redeemed by His grace and power. The

Son of God is the Good Shepherd, and men are the sheep whom He gathers into His fold. Christ, the Son of God, is not a humanly evolved Divinity, but the eternal Word voluntarily become incarnate, and by the free will of love giving Himself for the salvation of men. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. "God so loved the world that He gave His Only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." This is the message that has lifted thousands out of sin into holiness, and filled their mouths with laughter and their tongue with singing. This message corresponds with the terrible facts of man's moral history, and with the resplendent facts of the records of the grace of Christ. This is the message for which the conscience-stricken sinner will hunger to the end. This is God's banqueting house for the penitent, and His banner over them is everlasting love.

II. Yet we rejoice to affirm that the incarnation of the Son of God is a revelation of the mysterious glories of human life.

Although the kinship of man with God is immeasurably remote from identity, yet it is a glorious possession of our human nature; difficult to define, yet a matter for reverent joy. When we read that God made man in His own image, after His own likeness, imagination is quickened, and high hopes rise within us. When we sing the

words of the psalmist, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than Elohim, and hast crowned him with glory and honour," we realise that—

> "Trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home."

But it is in the Incarnation of the Son of God we have the full unveiling of the glory of our kinship with the eternal Spirit. Here we see that the kinship has depths and heights we should not otherwise have known. Further than ever from the province of definitions, it is lifted into the clear light of hope and purpose and ideal and joy. "Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself partook of the same." Wonderful must be our kinship with God, since the "Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," ay, and in that flesh revealed His Divine glory.

Yet the reasonableness of the Incarnation of the Son of God is manifested in glimpses which our mind obtains of man's likeness to the Divine Spirit.

The mind of man, exploring the universe of truth, is akin to that of God. God has written the book of creation, and the mind of man is one of the readers and interpreters of the book. The thought of man is clearly akin to the thought of the Creator, else the volume of the Creator's

thought would be unintelligible to him. To the reason in his own spirit man finds a corresponding reason in the world which the Logos, the Divine Reason, has made. God's thought creates universal and everlasting laws, and these are precisely the laws for which man's thought has been moulded. The mind of man searches for the universal in the particular details, and for the everlasting in the transitory. These he recognises as laws of Nature, the writing of the book of the eternal and universal Mind. He explores the limitless past and the boundless future, seeks the everlasting essence of beauty and order and truth, and listens rapturously while Nature discourses to him her age-long secrets. Let anyone test an ape with a chapter of science or philosophy, or with a passage of imaginative poetry, and he will at once perceive how far an ape is from a man, and how near a man is to God.

The spirit of man, moving in the universe of moral righteousness, is akin to that of God. The awful and glorious "moral imperative" which is ever immanent in the soul of man shows his high kinship with the eternal Spirit of righteousness, reveals him as a child, not of the temporal and temporary, but of the eternal. The great philosopher Kant felt the same awful majesty in the moral law as he felt in the stupendous arch of the midnight sky. And no wonder. For it was

the splendour of the universal and the eternal he felt in both. It was one manner of perception, although in the one case it was his moral vision which gave him the perception, and in the other case it was the vision of his thought. In either case, he " was voyaging through strange worlds, alone," or rather in company with the Divine Spirit of eternal thought and righteousness. Every attempt to build morality upon temporal considerations has broken down. The moral law is written in the heavens by the finger of God, and the spirit of man has read it there.

This kinship of man with God has been signed and sealed as both true and wonderful by the incarnation of the eternal Word. And, on the other hand, man's manifold kinship with the Divine Spirit, although it cannot bring the wonder of the Incarnation within the dialectic of logical compartments, yet makes this redemptive condescension of God both possible and credible. If it could be weighed and measured in our little balances, it would lose its transcendent glory, and run into the barren mould of logical identities, a mould in which so many have dissipated its glory in the present day. Yet when the glory came, the spirit of man responded to it. " They beheld His glory." And glorious as the new Word of God was, the sanctified spirits of men had power to read its Divine meanings, and to tell forth the

significance of its content. "We beheld His glory—the glory as of the Only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

III. The Incarnation has also given new glory to human life.

The Incarnation of the Son of God has not left human nature where it was, but imported into it a new Divine splendour. Wonderful as man was in his created likeness to God, the entrance of the Son of God into the vital body of humanity has raised human nature to a higher point than it ever attained before. This, like the Incarnation itself, is as difficult to define as it is clearly a fact. When "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among men," the measurements of humanity had to be taken from a new height, even from the glory of the Son of Man.

The human spirit is exalted by being represented by the sublime spirit of Jesus. The greatness of human nature is measured by its highest possible representative. Man's natural greatness is expressed by the great souls which our race has been capable of producing. The standard of human nature in the world of being is not the mental and moral pygmies of the race, but its mental and moral giants. For it clearly cannot produce anything greater than itself, although it may sometimes fall below its proper strength. The whole family receives lustre from the brilliancy of a single member.

When a man meditates upon the splendid majesties of a Shakespeare, a Milton, or the like among our great ones, he knows himself greater because he belongs to the race in which these are his brothers The whole of humanity is lifted to a higher plane by its great and good men.

Yet, whatever the natural potentialities of the human race may be, we know that it could never have produced a Jesus Christ. Such a Son of Man could only come from above; never from the natural genealogies of humanity, however brilliant. The Son of God, the effulgence of the Father's glory, is Son of Man. A more glorious element has descended into humanity from above, not by evolution, but by condescension. Yet is He not less truly human than the heroes of our boasted genealogies. He "became flesh." In Him our race took an upward leap. The incarnate Word lifted our human nature into a greatness above its former self.

"He is not ashamed to call us brethren." What splendour it gives to that human nature which He shares with us, when we realise that that Divine Son of Man is our Brother! How near He takes our humanity to the throne of God! What glory shines upon us when we see ourselves in Him! For He too is man—not less man than we are. Ay, He who walked daily with God, and heard the Father speak to Him as clearly as He

felt the throbbings of His own heart; He who walked on the mountain tops of truth, and saw the light of eternity with unshaded eyes; He whose soul was truth and whose heart was love boundless and undefiled; He who strode sublime above the power of time and death, and had the world underneath His feet; this Jesus is the Divine Man, our glorious Brother, who descended from the heights of glory to become our Brother, and who for evermore gives new glory to our favoured race.

Every period of man's life is uplifted by the Incarnation. The Divine Babe in the manger has made babyhood holier and diviner. The Divine Boy in Nazareth has given new beauty to boyhood and girlhood. The Divine Youth, from whom glory radiated on the carpenter's bench, has given added nobility to young manhood and young womanhood. Even the lifeless body has been invested with new sacredness and beauty since the unwilling tomb held the sacrificial body of the Son of Man. As the sun suffuses the clouds with its own splendid hues, so Jesus has beautified human life with the new glories of His own humanity.

But the greatest enhancement of man's natural greatness comes through the redemptive indwelling of the incarnate Word in the spirits of men. Through His voluntary incarnation Christ won the power of redemptive indwelling, giving new

life to the spirit, and transforming it into His own likeness. In truth, the Incarnation itself involved a vital indwelling in humanity. He had to enter vitally into our humanity before He could tabernacle among us. For the Incarnation was not a matter of external contact, but of vital organic union with our race. The incarnate Son became the living, throbbing centre of humanity, so that all the lives of all men impinged vitally upon His soul. His Spirit was baptised in the heart's blood of essential humanity. Thus it was that all the sin and the curse of the race beat upon His stricken life. But this was the entry of sacrificial union, and prepared the way for the deeper entry of vitalising and re-creating union. Christ cannot give His full glory to men until they receive Him into their hearts by faith. But those into whose hearts He thus enters are, beyond the measure of words, sharers of His glory.

IV. The Incarnation makes the uplifting of human life the divinest work of man. It has given such high value and such stupendous possibilities to human nature as to make the service of man incomparably our greatest earthly duty and privilege. Our Saviour set the highest value on men and women, because He saw human nature through the mirror of His own glorious humanity. The human soul was of more value than the whole world of material resource and

splendour. Every man might become a son of God, and share the heavenly glories of the Son of Man. When we see men and women in the light of the humanity of Christ, we do not wonder that He hungered for the souls of men, and saw no end in the world worth toiling for except the salvation and the exaltation of manhood and womanhood.

If we really and vitally believe in the Incarnation, we cannot fail to be impelled to the service of men and women. These are the true treasures of earth, and all else is dross. The natural cry, "A man's a man for a' that," is taken up from its earthly setting, and invested with unspeakable glories. A man becomes the brother of Christ, a possible sharer of His eternal glory. His fallen humanity, grand as it was in its ruins, may be caught up into the unutterable splendours of the new humanity of the incarnate Son. Men and women are God's jewels, and they who gather these jewels have joined in God's own highest task, and are multiplying the glories of the name of the incarnate Son.

Any work for the uplifting of men has in its measure the light of Christ upon it. The Christ who taught men truth has given new value to the discipline of the human mind. The Lord who calmed the passions of men has given new value to the discipline of emotion and will. And He who stretched forth His hand to heal the sick, He

who fed the hungry, gives high sanction to the service which would bring alleviation to the physical pains and wants of men. Every part of human life has risen in value, and every service of man stands higher, because the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.

Yet the Incarnation teaches us that the noblest end of life is the salvation of the spiritual nature of man. The chief glory of Christ's Divine humanity was "grace and truth." "God so loved the world that He gave His Only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." The service of the lower wants of man, which might receive great value from the higher glory, becomes all but worthless when it is divorced from the higher service of man's spiritual nature. The lowest must still be done in the light of the highest, and the highest must be made supreme. First the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then—the other things. The Incarnation was God's sacrificial way to bring salvation and glory to the spiritual nature of man. Bread and healing might have been given otherwise. But the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. If we would be in harmony with the incarnate Word, we must above all hunger and search for the souls of men.

Those who serve men's highest interest will not fail in the lesser things. Men may serve their

fellows in material things, and forget the greater interests of the spirit, but those who have compassion for souls will not neglect the soul's tenement. From the sacred centre of life love will flow to the circumference. He who came to die for sin touched with healing hand the sick bodies of men and women. It is a mistaken accusation that those who would save men spiritually do not care for them physically. If any seem to deserve this charge, they are but pretenders, and do not know the love of Christ. Those who see humanity in and through Christ will agonise first for the souls of men, but cannot possibly be heedless of any part of that human nature which Christ shared and sanctified.

The Incarnation reveals the splendid possibilities of even the lowest human life. The Son of Man vitally touches every member of our race. All are related to Him, and in His new life no one need fail to rise. The Incarnation contradicts the thought that there can be any hopeless cases. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation. His vital humanity reaches all the way to the lowest of our kind, and His redemptive life can lift the lowest all the way up to share His eternal glory. Since the Word has become flesh no one need despair. For there are many last that shall be first by the power of incarnate God. And they shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels.

III

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

And He was parted from them about a stone's cast; and He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.—Luke xxii. 41–44.

IT is clear that our Saviour has here arrived at the crucial point in His life on earth as the Saviour of men. Various explanations have been given of His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and especially has it been associated with some terrible onslaught of the Prince of Evil, some fearful deluge of temptation hurled against His holy soul. But, whatever truth there may be in subsidiary suggestions, the main staring fact is, that His "hour" had now come. That for which all His life had been a preparation was now upon Him in all its dread incumbency of desolating woe. From the mount of transfiguration He had been especially, specifically, and directly making His way towards the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. High and conspicuous above the average way of His life of sorrows stood

the cross, the goal of His sorrowing journey, the end for which all else was planned, the unique and decisive conflict and victory of His Messianic might. There was sweat of blood in Gethsemane because the shadow of the cross fell heavily upon it.

That this crucial act of atoning death had in it as an element all the finally concentrated power of the Prince of Darkness embattled against Him, is not denied or doubted. A little later in this chapter, in Luke's gospel, Jesus says to those who came to take Him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." In another connection, the evangelist John records His saying to His disciples in His closing discourses, "The prince of the world cometh, and he hath nothing in Me." The emphatic beginning, and the emphatic end of our Saviour's Messianic course seem to have been singled out for special assaults of the Devil. The untried Messiah in the wilderness he sought, with the subtlest and seemingly most innocent suggestions, to deflect from His choice of the absolutely simple and lowly path, to entangle with the pure consciousness of His own Divine greatness, and to induce to seize the power and glory of His kingdom with a strong and sudden hand. No sophistry could darken the light of His pure soul, and the discomfited fiend, baffled and raging, saw the Son of God take His lowly way of patience and

sorrow and suffering as the Son of Man, and began to feel the pangs of his final defeat by this unconquerable Champion of humanity.

The activity of the powers of evil around the transcendent tragedy of the cross is not less manifest. The battle against His soul, which had been foiled in the calm hour of His meditative self-consciousness in the wilderness, was now renewed with increased fury in the hour of His supreme suffering. Satanic activity is revealed as hotly and malignantly engaged in intensifying the tragic terror of the hour. The Devil chooses one of the twelve as his instrument for basely betraying the gentle and gracious Master, striking barbed wounds into His soul from the hands of one who was privileged to give Him the kiss of friendship. The same satanic malevolence kindled sevenfold the rage of the chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees and the people against Him, and even incited the Roman soldiery to treat Him with bitter mockery and scorn. It was the last battle, an assault of desperation, on the part of the powers of hell against the Lord of Redemption. And as humanity's sin and curse beat upon His quivering soul, desolating it with sacrificial pangs beyond the imagination of men, hell's legions joined in making more terrible the impact, if peradventure even His proved strength might be overcome, and He might shrink and fail to drink the last dregs

of the cup of desolation and terror. When at length He cried, " It is finished," " Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," hell was conquered and man redeemed.

Yet the satanic temptation was there by opportunity, and the opportunity was the offering of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. The satanic temptation was an added emphasis to the " hour," but the hour of the cross was immeasurably more than an assault of Satan, else it had been but the scene of the wilderness repeated. The " cup " was not a temptation of the Evil One, but the measure and price of human redemption.

It is impossible, in the light of the New Testament records, to deny a unique place to the death of Christ in His redemptive work. There appear to be two classes who would deny unique redemptive efficacy to His death. Some are anxious lest the redemptive quality of His life should be ignored in giving unique value to His death. But others would minimise the great doctrine of the atonement, and regard the Saviour's death on the cross as but a natural incident in a life of general self-sacrifice and continuous martyrdom. But all the records show clearly that Christ in His death specifically and uniquely bore the sins of men and made atonement for guilty humanity. That His life of suffering was vitally related to His death, and that there was a sense in which He was cruci-

fied by the world from the beginning, is not in doubt. All that He did had redemptive value. Yet the Scriptures indicate a stupendous difference between His general redemptive activity in life and the unique mystery of the cross. It was in the cross that atonement was once for all definitely and completely made for the sin of the world.

The contemplation of the agony in the garden in association with the death of the cross will bring to view the uniqueness of His death, together with the transcendent place it occupies in the process of the world's salvation.

I. We perceive in this agony the advent of a new and unprecedented ordeal.

The circumstances emphatically point to a tremendous crisis such as had no parallel even in the wonderful life of the Christ. It is impossible for us who believe simply and unreservedly in the sublime reality of the Incarnation to undervalue the significance of the other great crises in the life of the Son of Man. We know that from the first His pure soul was so vitally inwoven into our human fibre that the weight of our sin and sorrow was in a real sense being borne by "the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." All His life He was being bruised for our iniquities and wounded for our transgressions. We even confess that it is impossible to put the difference into any logical terms, for the whole of this river of salva-

tion is too deep for our measurements. None the less is it clear that the death of Christ had in it some stupendous element of atoning suffering which marked it off from all the rest of His life with a fundamental difference. It was pre-eminently the sacrificial act by which God "reconciled a world unto Himself."

To suggest, as some moderns do, that this distinction was an invention of the apostles, or of the early Church, is to ignore the attention which Jesus called to the profound significance of His death, and the unique mystical and redemptive sublimity with which He surrounded it. Above the path of His ministering life He solemnly held aloft the blazoned mystery and glory of His death. Again and again He flung out the shadow of His cross as the specific medium of human redemption. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it beareth much fruit." "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." "And Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat;

this is My body. And He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins." "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Even if an over-speculative criticism should demand the invalidation of some of these utterances, it can make no essential difference. Sufficient remains to leave a weft which cannot be torn. This significant attitude towards His death was a fundamental part of His outlook and teaching. The apostles, in preaching salvation through Christ crucified, were absolutely loyal to the evangel given them by their Lord.

The records of our Lord's life and death are in harmony with the doctrine of the distinctive and unique character of His death as the pre-eminent act of redemption. The impact of His death upon Him produces effects upon His mind that startle and bewilder us, and appear to contradict all that we had read in His past life. The normal law, "As is the life, so is the death," seems here to be violently contradicted and overturned. The contradiction commences with the agony in the garden. For the first time there comes into view a distinction of "wills" between the Father and the Son. Up to that time such a distinction had appeared impossible. "I and My Father are one.'

"It is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him that sent Me." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The redemptive activity of the Saviour's life had apparently involved no strain upon this perfect unity of will in the Father and the Son. But in the garden of Gethsemane, for the first time, a new and awful element appears, an element of strain, of holy agony, in which the Son, not without sweat of blood, feels in anguish the pulse of the two wills, yet does not fail in the terrible task of holding their harmony unbroken. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done."

This significant separation of the Father and the Son, which began under the immediate shadow of the cross in Gethsemane, reached its terrible climax in the cry from the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? The relation between the two crises is manifest. In Gethsemane Jesus started on a new path, a mysterious way of suffering in which He was being, in some awful manner, separated from His Father, and left, for the first time, in black and unfathomable abysses of death, alone. A startling, an amazing, change for Him who had said: "I am not alone, for the Father is with Me." "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." From the agony of

the dual will in Gethsemane to the sense of separation and isolation on the cross, the way is one, and marks an experience which stands alone even in the redemptive life of the Son of Man.

II. There is no adequate explanation of this agony and its sequel except that of atonement for the sin of the world.

The bread which He gives is His flesh, for the life of the world. His blood is the blood of the new Covenant, and is shed for many unto remission of sins. With this august conception the records of Gethsemane and Calvary agree. Other explanations leave us with deeper mysteries than they seek to solve. The awful scenes belong to a world infinitely remote from the course of martyrdom. This great Soul, that walked majestically day by day in intimate fellowship with God, could not have been wrung with unutterable agony at the prospect of martyrdom, even the painful martyrdom of the crucifixion. After a life of perfect accord with the Father, His will could not have been wrenched and tortured by the mere prospect of a violent death. He who had lain all His life on the bosom of the Father, could not have felt forsaken by Him when He was simply passing through the gates of a painful death back to the Father whose love had sustained His wonderful life. It is not thus that martyrs suffer. How different was Paul's cry : " I am now ready to be

offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Men do not live in the light and love of God all their lives, and then plunge at last into agony and sweat of blood and abysmal desolation, just because they are called to pass to glory through death, even though it be a death of cruel martyrdom. Is any reasonable man prepared to rank the martyrs who have triumphantly trusted in God, and walked all their way of death without any eclipse of vision, above the mighty Spirit of the Christ? Yet he must do so, unless he will recognise in the death of Jesus something immeasurably more than the martyrdom of a holy Man. Nothing can be more certain than this, that Jesus could have passed through martyrdom without a tremor, never having any other experience than the normal experience of His Spirit, "I and My Father are one."

In such conflict and desolation of the Son of Man the agony must have been infinite. The glorious essence of His life was His perfect union with His Father. The eternal music of His Spirit was the boundless love and trust in which the Father and He were linked from eternity. In all His sorrowful way on the earth, this had still remained untouched and unchallenged. Men might launch their torments upon Him, but "the Father was with Him." He might sob over a doomed city, or shed tears at the grave of a friend, but

His deep soul was still tranquil in the confidence of His Father's bosom. But now some awful abyss piled up a bottomless agony upon Him; in some awful way His will was being sundered from His Father's will. This, indeed, was death. Surely this was the terror. Not the fear of any torture which could be inflicted upon Him, but the dread sense of being separated from His Father. Here is room for agony and sweat of blood. Here He was heard in that He feared. But once more on the cross the awful terror rolled over Him, and He cried in the desolation of His Spirit to the Father who was sundered from Him. Who can understand His agony?

What, then, is the meaning of this infinite agony of the Son of Man? Surely there is but one explanation that is at all adequate. Why should that pure and sinless Soul suffer the terror of being separated from His Father? It is incredible as the natural consummation of that glorious life. To think of it as wantonly inflicted upon Him would make the heavens hideous. Then the meaning of it must lie somewhere in His redemptive relation to our sinful humanity. The attack upon the union of His will with the Father's will must be related to the sundering of the will of humanity from the will of God. His sense of separation from the Father must have its roots in the separation which sin has effected between

humanity and God. His own simple and pure personality, regarded apart, cannot explain Gethsemane and Calvary But the mystery becomes luminous when we regard Him as the vital Representative of our fallen race, as the agonising Soul of our stricken humanity.

This is the marvel of Divine power and love which angels desire to look into. We may venture to affirm that no interpretations and definitions which men or angels give of it will ever be adequate. No doubt many attempts to embody the mystery in theological definitions have been one-sided, and even orthodoxy has sometimes reduced the boundless energies of Divine self-sacrifice to a mechanism of weights and balances. In the heart of it, the atonement is " spirit and life," without measure and without bound. Its significance is manifold, and it may be variously, albeit partially, stated from many sides of thought and experience. Yet for all that, it is not a " blind " spot for faith, with no luminous meaning for the reason or the understanding. The Atonement, like the heavens, stretches far beyond our reach or ken, yet, even as in the boundless skies, we can see in it beauty, order, meaning, and sublimity. Its circumference we cannot measure, but its spacious and vital centre we can discern with true understanding. As to the essence of the Atonement, it is impossible for a candid mind to mistake the clear meaning

of the utterances of the New Testament, or to fail to find in them salvation, inspiration, and light. "To give His life a ransom for many." "Behold the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world." "He who knew no sin became sin for us." "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." "If One died for all, then all died." "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." Nothing can be clearer than the central significance of this. The Scriptures give many sidelights on the vast theme of the death of Christ, but this centre of vicarious or representative suffering for humanity is fundamental to the gospel. It is not only reasonable truth; it is also life. By His stripes we are healed.

III. This representative agony is the profoundest revelation of the glory of Christ as the Son of God.

The old prophet, moved by the Spirit of God, said this great and profound thing: "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Infinite and effectual power to bear the sin of the world is the supreme glory of incarnate God.

The natural and unstrained record of the

evangelists is in striking contrast with the manipulations of those who would construct a consistent scheme for the glory of Christ. Luke's verses of the agony (vv. 43, 44) are found omitted in some unimportant manuscripts. The reason is tersely given by Heinrich Meyer: "The verses are genuine. Their omission is the work of the orthodox, to whom their contents appeared objectionable in respect of the Divinity of Christ." Such is our pious bungling, when we put up hasty hands to correct the motions of the ark of God, and succeed only in marring it with stained fingers. We forget that the Incarnation is Life, boundless Life, and we try to twist it into the cramped grooves of a small logic. But the evangelists gave us the manifold facts, and allowed the consequences to take care of themselves. The evangelist who wrote, "And the Word was God," also recorded, "Jesus wept." It was he also who put side by side, "I and the Father are one," and, "My Father is greater than I." And often it turns out that the deeps of humiliation, which timid theologians would delete, are just the supreme concentrations of His glory, the awful abysses of His redemptive might. The depth of His agony was the height of His Messianic glory. When He could bear the weight of "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" then, indeed, did He show Himself to be the Son of God with power.

Through the power of this representative agony He won His Messianic throne. Reverently we behold this as a new glory for the Son of God. He who wore the glory of having created the worlds now wears the new glory of having borne away a world's curse by the infinite travail of His soul. We are in deep waters here, mysteries of Divine love and self-sacrifice. But we perceive, believe, and adore. "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name." The God of redemption is the highest name in the universe. The crown of victorious self-sacrifice is the brightest crown on the brow of the Son of God. Because of the Lamb that is slain, the throne of the Son of God is more glorious, and a new song of praise surges from a wondering heaven against the throne of God and of the Lamb. The measure of His descent into the abyss of agony was the measure of His ascent to the height of glory. And this is also the measure of His power to save. Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world. The Lord of the agony cannot fail. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

IV

THE ATONING GOD

To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling a world unto Himself.—2 Cor. v. 19.

THE apostle is moving in vast realms in this passage, as he ever must do when he deals with the infinite forces which have wrought salvation for a world of sinners. From the eleventh verse to the nineteenth his discourse has widened and deepened, like the onward flow of the river of God, until we are conducted to a tide which has no bottom or shore. He begins, as he so often does, with his own spiritual experiences and perceptions, for a man can never get into the deep things of truth save from the starting-point of personal spiritual perceptions and powers. His enemies have criticised him, but he trusts that his converts and friends at Corinth will understand the sacred and sincere principles and purposes of his life. He believes that the holy reverence for his Master which has continually moved him must have touched a responsive chord in the consciences of the saints at Corinth. He trusts they will see that he had no purpose of his own to serve, and

that he but moved and acted in response to heavenly powers to which he had surrendered his life. "For whether we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you." It was a power outside of himself which dictated the varied manifestations of his ministry.

At the thought of this determining power by which he was mastered and led, the apostle's thought and word break into fire. The constraining power was "the love of Christ." What, then, was the meaning and measure of this power? What manner of Christ was it who thus constrained, and what was the measure of the love that conquered? It was a Christ who was great enough to die for all men, and whose love was capable of the measureless self-sacrifice. "Because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died. And He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again." It was therefore the knowledge of the heavenly Christ who fills all human life that counted for salvation. To have known Him in the days of His flesh as a Man among men was a detail carrying no necessary or essential advantage. In this connection Paul incidentally informs us of the interesting circumstance that he himself had known Jesus in the days of His flesh, a comparatively unimportant matter to one

whose life was all surrendered to the Lord who died and rose again. "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more. So that, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation." The measureless Christ, who died for all and rose again, is the Re-creator of human life. "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."

The apostle is being carried onward to a tremendous, but inevitable, conclusion. The power which was sufficient for all this could have no limit. It could be nothing less than the infinite power of God. The transcendent mystery and glory of the atonement of the cross was, that God Himself was in it. In its last and awful and blessed meaning the giving of the Only begotten Son was God's own giving of Himself for the sins of a world. No power less than that of God could make atonement for the sins of the world. The agony that pierced the soul of the Crucified pierced in some unimaginable way the very heart of God. The Lamb that was slain was essentially One with Him that sitteth upon the throne. The throne of God took up the cross into its own awful and eternal glory. "And all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." No

wonder that the angels desire to look into this transcendent mystery of love. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

It is not surprising that the logic of scepticism shivers on the brink of this mighty sea of God's self-sacrificing love. Paul's logic of grace is clear and irrefutable. If man is to trust in Christ for eternal salvation, then God must have been "in Christ" in all that work of salvation. But the pity is, that so many employ, not the logic of grace, but that of dialectical narrowness. They make little premisses of human wisdom, which God's great premisses of boundless love and grace would immediately sweep away, if they would only let them do so. What a sterile and miserable little speculation it was to imagine that, although Deity was in the Man Jesus most of His life, it summarily deserted Him when He came to the cross, and left only an innocent man to suffer for the measureless guilt of a fallen world! And this baseless phantasy, which would have left the world still unredeemed, was conjured up in the interests of an arbitrary and mechanical conception of the nature and life of the Deity. How the breezes of heaven blow upon us when we get out of the cell of this stuffy wisdom, and feel the love of God in its boundless freedom in the exultant

music of the apostle : " And all things are of God. God was in Christ reconciling a world unto Himself." That is glorious. And our enfranchised hearts know that it is Divinely true.

I. We would first of all show the falsity of the conception of God which denies that God was in the atoning Christ.

The main premiss of scepticism is, that suffering cannot in any way touch the life of Deity. It is upon this hypothesis those evasions are based which would make the cross of Christ of no effect. Yet it is strange that any thoughtful moral men could build upon such a precarious foundation. The conception of an absolutely unaffected Deity, of a God living in undisturbed and unemotional serenity, is not a Christian notion at all, but a heathen notion imported into Christian thinking. " The tranquil gods that dwell at ease " did very well in abstract theory for Greek and Roman, but as soon as they brought their gods in poetry or legend into vital contact with the affairs of men, this hypothetical tranquillity and ease very speedily disappeared. Pagan philosophy might dream of a " moveless " Something which was the cause of all motion, but was never able to show how it could move all things without being moved itself. Even philosophy since then has demanded that God shall be recognised as vitally immanent in His moving, struggling, groaning world.

In the whole of the revelation of the Old and New Testaments God is vitally and effectually present in human life, working, loving, sympathising, redeeming. The belief throughout in God's intense moral sympathy and action made it impossible for Him to be reduced in this lofty revelation to the quality of a Greek statue. How could He be truly moral, and in vital and gracious relation with a fallen world, and yet be unmoved and untouched with our conflict of sin and sorrow? How could He truly love, and yet not feel the sorrows and sufferings of His loved ones? A living, moral, redeeming God can never be reasonably conceived as an eternally impassive Being. So fundamental is this faith in the Old Testament that the most daring anthropomorphisms are employed to express it, and it is exquisitely summed up in that beautiful passage: "In all our afflictions He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved us."

That the New Testament teaches the same conception of the Deity cannot be reasonably doubted. All God's moral sympathy and vital interest in humanity is summed up in the great word, "God is love." God's relation to the Divine Son is expressed in forms of infinite tenderness. "The Only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." "The Father loveth the Son." "God so loved the world that He gave His Only begotten

Son." Jesus taught that His own words of pity and love, and all the reactions of His pure and tender soul upon the sins and sorrows of men, were expressions of the heart of the Father. Also the conception is taught that the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Holy Trinity, can be grieved by the sins of men. How far this inspiring conception of God is removed from the barren image upon which men would deny the good tidings of boundless atonement made by the atoning God!

The conception of suffering as in itself an evil belongs to a hasty earthly ideal of happiness, not to God's ideal of blessedness. To conceive of suffering as a defect upon blessedness is due to our superficial way of looking at the factors of being. Carlyle's thunder, "Who told thee that thou hast a right to be happy?" and his injunction to seek blessedness instead, have even profounder applications than mayhap even he himself knew or considered at the moment. Martyrs have experienced the deepest blessedness in the very height of their tortures. The soul of the Son of Man lived always in perfect blessedness, although He was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." We even dare reverently to say that the essential founts of His blessedness were not disturbed in the blackest centre of His atoning death. Perfect holiness and love are of necessity perfect blessedness. Infinite blessedness is just doing the will of infinite love,

We do not make God immutably blessed by making Him immutably impassive, but rather by believing in His infinitely responsive heart of love.

The power to suffer for and with our loved ones is the highest expression and glory of love. If God were incapable of this, then there would be heights of love beyond His reach, and we should have to come to the impossible conclusion that the heart of man can enter deeper into the mystery and power of love than the heart of God can do. If the Son could suffer infinitely and the heart of God could not suffer in Him and with Him, what meaning can be attached to the words: "God so loved the world that He gave His Only begotten Son." "He who spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." What was there to surrender if God is absolutely impassive? What meaning is there in, "The Father loveth the Son," if the Son could suffer the agony of infinite desolation, and the Father have no share in it? Did not Jesus say, "I and the Father are One"? Would not this be an idle statement if they ceased to be One in the awful deeps of self-sacrifice?

We do not give glory to God by assigning to Him a mechanical perfection which must at the same time involve mechanical limitation. Opposition to the gospel of Christ is frequently occasioned by the conception of God as a logically defined term in a philosophical syllogism, and not as the infinite

Personality of a free and loving will. Would a mother deem her love satisfied if she did not, and could not, suffer with her suffering child? Nay, she would deem herself disgraced by her insensibility. Even if she but imagined herself too insensible, she would suffer pangs because of the imagined inertness and inadequateness of her love. If she were offered the gift of insensibility, the power of looking without a pang on her loved ones suffering, not for worlds would she accept such immunity. And if she were told that God possessed such immunity, her mother-heart of suffering love would know itself greater than such a God. Yet the eternal God says: "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget. Yet will I not forget thee. I have graven thee on the palms of My hands." The glory of God is His love. The glory of His love is that it is life. The glory of His life of love is that for love's sake it could suffer infinitely, that "God was in Christ reconciling a world unto Himself."

II. We now come to consider, in relation to this redemptive power and work of God, the need of an infinite atonement for the sin of the world.

It is in the boundless abysses of atonement for sin that Paul finds the need of "God in Christ" reconciling a world unto Himself. The death of atonement must be so stupendously great that it

must represent death for all men—all men of all nations and all generations and all ages. "One died for all, therefore all died." And this one death must hold the power and energy of life for all our dead humanity, must send forth a living breath that shall give eternal life to the dead multitudes in the poisoned valley of sin. "That they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again." In this view of the world and its need, the gospel of grace and hope could not do with anything less than an atoning God. "God was in Christ" in the great mystery of the sacrifice for sin. The work demanded from Christ, and the consequences as affirmed by Paul, are given forcibly by Browning in the closing lines of "A death in the Desert":

> "Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,
> Say, twelve years longer (twelve years, some compute),
> See if, for every finger of thy hands,
> There be not found, that day the world shall end,
> Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's Word
> That He will grow incorporate with all,
> With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,
> Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?
> Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.
> Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
> Or lost!"

A dread word that last one—"Or lost." Ay, but, if the Christ has lost, then a world descends into the abyss with Him. Yet He must lose, or be "the illimitable God." This awful logic of life is certain. But, thank God, the fact is not

less certain. The Christ has conquered, for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

If one wishes to escape from such a glorious message, the only way of escape is by denying the conception of sin upon which the gospel of redemption is built, and thus altogether repudiating the need of atonement for sin. I am aware that this expedient is not infrequently adopted in the present day by those who reject the gospel of Divine atonement for the sin of the world. I cannot follow these evasions in the present discourse, but I venture to affirm that every attempt to represent sin as other than fundamentally fatal to the individual and to the race will come to grief against the inexorable testimony of conscience and the grim facts of man's moral history. The theories that make light of sin will be defeated by the moral tragedies of human life. Human thought may be baffled by the mysterious problem of the origin of sin, but the fact will still remain that this is a fallen world, that it is broken and impotent in its fall, and that its own redemption was beyond its power. The manifest facts of being will attest, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." And the gospel of the atonement of the Son of God for sin will bring hope and life to thousands who will accept the grace.

Yet there seem to be some who hold God incapable of making the atonement of suffering

for sin, who yet believe that He used the holy Man Jesus to do this work of love and grace for Him. The faith of such believers in the Atonement is often true and good, but their thoughts are in curious confusion. Surely God would be robbed of His glory if the Man Jesus could accomplish a work of redemption which God Himself was incapable of accomplishing! Is a man to be able to do a great work of salvation from which God is by His nature precluded? This is surely unthinkable. Nor could any man bear the weight of the world's sin and woe. Only God can bear all the dread weight of the burden of our humanity. God could not delegate this boundless work of love and grace to another. "God was in Christ reconciling a world unto Himself."

III. We see the beauty, sufficiency, and inspiration of this gospel of the atoning God.

It brings God very near to us in living and loving association and fellowship. Philosophy lifts God into a cold and distant heaven of abstract terms, or dissipates Him along the myriad avenues of His creation. And even our ordinary thought is apt to divide the eternal Spirit of peace and joy by an impassable gulf from the broken paths, the entangling sorrows, and the painful vicissitudes of our daily human life. "God is in heaven, and we are upon earth" often sums up our thought of His relation to us. But when we see the light of

revelation fall upon the mystery of the atonement of Christ, when we realise that it was God Himself "who was afflicted in our afflictions," and that "God was in Christ" in the propitiation of the cross," then our kinship with Him is felt by us in a new and wonderful way. He is no longer removed from us by abysses of glory, but we learn to lean upon His breast, "like the beloved John," and to recognise the responsive throbbings of His great heart of love. We behold Him in the Son of Man. We see the wounds of love in His hands and feet and side. We see the love-light sweeter through the redemptive grace of His eyes. We know that our sorrows are His, and He has grown "closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet," our loved Companion and Guard in life and in death.

This message also gives suffering a glory which transforms and exalts it. Since suffering is love's highest privilege, clearly the cross gives us the secret of much beauty and joy in the suffering life of earth. It is true that the cross does not sanction wanton suffering. Not a jot of the passion of the Christ was without its end, not a pang of His travail shall be without its satisfying fruit. It is still a privilege to alleviate human suffering wherever we can, even as Christ did when He healed the sick, and fed the multitude, and restored the dead to the mourners. But there is

suffering which is all-beautiful, and becomes holy and wonderful in the light which is shed upon it from the cross. The suffering which is the throbbing pulse of love is not an evil, but a good. It brings us into mystical relation with the mystery of God in His atoning Son. Let us not lament, if we suffer for love's sake. Wearing our crown of thorns, let us stand before the cross, and the music of the Divine love will give us a blessedness which is only known when love is glorified with wounded hands and feet.

This message of the atoning God gives us assurance of the victorious end of the gospel of Christ. If the Author of the gospel were a man, and nothing more, we could not be sure of the end. Even if he were sinless, even if he were wise above other men, if he possessed the highest genius, yet we could not be sure of the end. A man could not be sufficient for the destiny of humanity. He might be foiled by the terrible strain of time. His purpose might fall into hopeless collapse and ruin. But there can be no failure for the Christ who is the Son of God. The power and love of the omnipotent God are at the heart of His redemptive work. His atonement is set in the life of God, and out of the red seed of such a sacrifice the harvest of grace must and shall be reaped. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Therefore He must reign for ever and ever. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

V

THE SECRET OF JESUS

And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath ; I am from above. Ye are of this world ; I am not of this world.—JOHN VIII. 23.

THUS did Jesus speak in simple majesty of Himself. The common voice of the people, on the other side, made this response : " Is not this the carpenter's son ? Is not His mother called Mary ? and His brethren, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas ? And His sisters, are they not all with us ? Whence then hath this Man all these things ? " Such a portrait as they paint of Him is easily made visible and clear before our eyes, and we must not shirk the picture. To get the secret of Jesus, we must not surround Him with any false glamour, or seek to behold Him save in the complete form in which He appeared before men. We must honestly and frankly " behold the Man." We shall not glorify His Divinity by veiling or minimising His humanity, or show forth the white robes of His celestial splendour by hiding his peasant garb and appearance. When Jesus spoke the magnificent words of our text, He was quite aware of the reality and correctness of the

other picture which was obtrusively manifest to the eyes of those around Him. The Man who spoke thus was clearly a Galilean peasant, a carpenter's son, and, according to Mark, Himself a carpenter. We are not afraid to see the Man, Jesus, just as the disciples saw Him, a lowly Man among men.

But the great question we need to answer is, " Can we look at the portrait which the Jews saw and described until it grows into the transcendent portrait which Jesus here painted of Himself ? Can we reverently gaze into His humanity until we see it manifest the glory of His Divinity ? Can we watch the Galilean peasant until He is transfigured before us, and we cry, ' Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ' " ? In this real Man, dwelling among men, can we catch the rays of Divine glory—glory of the Only begotten from the Father ? Can we through the veil of the flesh be introduced to the Divine secret of Jesus ?

In the previous discourses in this volume we have approached the Son of God from the heights, after the manner of John in the beginning of his gospel. We have declared and expounded the incarnation of the eternal Word. We have seen the Holy Child begotten of God through the energy of the Holy Spirit, and therefore called the Son of God. We have seen the tremendous demand of atonement for sin, and shown that complete atone-

ment, demanding infinite power of suffering and of life, could only have been accomplished by the very life of God. In this way the Redeemer of men has appeared before us as "very God of very God." "God was in Christ" in the essential work of redemption. We have beheld the glory of the Son of God in the awful necessities of atoning power. To complete the picture and the demonstration of the Divine glory of the Christ, we now need to alter our point of view, to behold the Man until we are compelled to cry, "Truly this was the Son of God." Then our circle of vision will be complete, and the human life of Jesus will be harmonised with the Divine glory demanded for the Expiator of sin.

I. We shall commence this inquiry by considering the transcendent claim of the Man, Jesus.

This Man, in His peasant garb, calmly and majestically makes claims for Himself which, if they were not true and could not be demonstrated, would—we say it with profound reverence—stamp Him with insanity. They were claims which could not but startle all who heard them, and so far maddened His enemies that they wished to kill Him. When He said, "If a man keep My word, he shall never taste of death," they recognised that He set Himself immeasurably above all the greatest and holiest men of their remarkable sacred records. "Art Thou greater than our father, Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom

makest Thou Thyself ? " In another passage they pierce into the deep heart of this claim, and say plainly that He ought to be put to death " because He called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." In the words of our text Jesus puts His transcendent claim into a form of profound but clear brevity.

He claims that His personality is transcendently unique. He distinguishes the " I " from the " ye " as kind is distinguished from kind. They belong to a common class ; He stands by Himself, alone. Between them and Him there is a great gulf fixed, a gulf of sundered life, which cannot be bridged. He is not to be catalogued with earth's great ones, the geniuses of human genealogy. He is not one of a glorious fellowship of prophets or sages. He cannot be bracketed with the brilliant births of humanity. " Who shall declare His generation ? " He is without beginning or end of days. He stands upon the mountain-tops of transcendent glory, all alone. " One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

This claim is unfolded by the affirmation of His celestial origin. " Ye are from beneath ; I am from above." This so far explains and accounts for His unique personality. The Son of Man consistently and continually manifests His consciousness of His celestial origin. He affirms in a variety of forms and with variant emphasis that His origin

is not in earth, but in heaven. He knew that He had come into the world out of the heavenly places. He was the Messenger and Lord of redemption come from the eternal Source of power to save humanity. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "And no man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man." "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven." "Before Abraham was, I am." "Ye are from beneath; I am from above." From this followed that in and through His natural life He was of supernatural essence. "Ye are of this kosmos; I am not of this kosmos." It is true that in John xvii. 16, our Saviour uses a similar word concerning His disciples. "They are not of this kosmos, even as I am not of this kosmos." But in this latter case He evidently applies the words to them in a secondary and derivative sense. They are not of the world, because Christ has "chosen them out of the world." But the Christ was never "of the world" at all. He was "not of the world" by nature. They were "not of the world" by grace. His life belonged to the supernatural sphere; He raises His people to sit with Him in heavenly places. Of this supernatural glory Jesus is always conscious. "The Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins." "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath day." "From henceforth ye

shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Many quotations are not necessary. The great consciousness sat upon Him continually, that He was " not of this world."

This claim and consciousness found its climax in His affirmation that the celestial source of His origin was the life of the Father. He did not link Himself with celestial beings of created splendour, or claim to have derived from ancient seats of angelic glories. The glory which He had " before the world was " shone in His consciousness as " glory with the Father." Upon the confession, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," He pronounced His highest benediction. He said to His disciples, " I came out from the Father, and am come into the world ; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." It became clear to those who heard and saw Him that He affirmed " that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

II. We next consider the transcendent life of the Man, Jesus, in relation to this claim.

Not less remarkable than this sublime claim itself is the reception which this claim has received. If there were nothing but the common life of a Galilean peasant on the one hand, and this unparalleled claim on the other, the grotesque disparity between the life and the claim would

simply have covered Him with perpetual ridicule. We cannot imagine any one, even of earth's greatest sons, making such a claim without incurring pity or scorn, and a loss of status in the world of sanity. Rather, the greater they were, and the more lucid their mental and spiritual vision, the further would they be removed from the possibility of incurring the censure and ridicule which would follow such a claim. There is no other figure in human history before whom we can conceive any great souls of men worshipping, and crying, "My Lord and my God."

Why, here then is a marvel not less wonderful than the marvellous claim itself—the marvel of its acceptance by the minds and hearts of men. True, there were those who would not believe Him, and who willed to destroy Him as a blasphemer. But we know that they were men whose spiritual vision was dark, and whose sordid ideals were stabbed to the heart by the arrows of His sublime truth. They hated Him just because of the Divine glory which was too high for them, yet condemned their corrupt thoughts and actions. And even they were bewildered by the disparity between His supposed origin and His wonderful life. They cried, "Is not this the carpenter? Whence hath this man these things? What is the wisdom which is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by His hands?" They would not gaze

honestly at the glory, and so " they were caused to stumble."

But when we turn away from these obviously blind men, we see an amazing thing. Simple, earnest men, with shrewd spiritual eyes, men whom we afterwards know as great moral and spiritual heroes, began to see in this Man the Divine glory which He claimed. They were in the main simple Galilean peasants who knew the life-marks of the ordinary Galilean peasant through and through. Jesus made no attempt to occupy a mysterious pedestal above them, or to hold Himself majestically aloof, as some great ones have done in the fear that " a hero might prove no hero to his valet." He did not make His dwelling in some twilight heights, or in secret retreats of imagined glory. On the contrary, He " tabernacled " with, was the tent-companion of, His disciples. He let them see daily and close at hand His lowly peasant manhood, in humble and every-day circumstances in lowly places. They saw Him in rest and in action, foot-weary on the hills and asleep on the boat. They ate with Him, familiarly conversed with Him, and slept with Him. They heard Him speak words of joy, and saw Him shed tears of sorrow. He was among them as one that served, and symbolised His lowly fellowship with them by girding Himself with a towel and washing their feet. The lowly human form they had often

seen weary and asleep they saw at last nailed to the cross and put to death. Yet, through this emphatic vision of the Son of Man they clearly beheld the Son of God. They beheld His glory. They knew that they had heard, that they had seen with their eyes, that their hands had handled, the Word of Life. The eternal Life, which was with the Father, had been manifested unto them.

That was only the beginning of His triumph. The best minds and choicest spirits of succeeding generations have approved and confirmed their verdict. It would, in truth, have been sufficiently startling and significant if only the spiritual response of the common people had continued to recognise and worship His Divine glory, if the unlearned voice of the deep intuition of the human spirit had alone continued the great testimony, and if the " wise and the prudent " had left the perpetual vision of the glory of Jesus to the spiritual illumination of the " babes " of the kingdom of heaven. The compelling power of the glory of the Man of Nazareth began with these, but did not end with them. The vision fell upon the " wise, the mighty, and the noble," and convinced them even as it had convinced the lowlier visionaries of the kingdom. Men of learning and profound thought, who knew how to appraise men with piercing and critical judgment, saw in the Christ the same Divine glory which Peter and John saw. Not by fanatical

and unreasoning emotion was His transcendent claim acknowledged, but by the mind of the mature thinker, by the sober judgment of the philosopher, by the man of wide learning and comprehensive conceptions. Even this day the noblest intellects of our globe think themselves honoured in worshipping the " glory as of the Only begotten from the Father," in admitting the claim of the Galilean peasant to be the Son of God. The Nazarene has conquered, and forced His astounding claim upon the noblest thought and deepest apprehension of the world.

What has compelled this marvellous verdict ?

Correspondent with His claim to the possession of an absolutely unique personality shone forth His life of absolute sinlessness. If anything can be certain in the records of men, the sinlessness of the life of Jesus stands in the forefront of certainty. The idea that that sinless life was invented by sinful men is one of the absurdities of fantastic speculation. It is perhaps possible to invent a colourless history in which positive wrong shall be avoided, but such a history, instead of being merely sinful, would, for want of the rich fullness of positive life, be a barren nothingness, a woven torpor of sin. But Jesus is depicted in every variety of circumstance, breathing every manner of vital energy, passion, and indignation, in the midst of circumstances of subtlest and most aggressive tempta-

tions, responsive in the most intimate and sensitive way to the whirl of the world around Him. Moreover, He is depicted by four different men, who by no means meekly and carefully tread in one another's tracks, and who often relate things of which it is plain they did not understand the full significance. Yet on every part of this myriad-sided life there is always clear and plain this writing —" yet without sin."

His own consciousness was in itself decisive. The inexorable law of a sinful life is, that the exquisite consciousness of sin grows with growing holiness. Hence there has never been any consciousness of sinlessness in any manifestly holy man, except in Jesus. The greatest saints have been the greatest penitents, and each new increment of purity has more clearly revealed the subtle stains of the soul. But there is never a sign of consciousness of sin in Jesus, although His pure soul must have been exquisitely conscious of the slightest stain of evil. He taught His disciples to pray for forgiveness for their trespasses, but never breathed such a prayer for Himself. In the awful presence of the Father, He stood and spoke with holy calm and boldness, as One in stainless harmony with the Father's will. Other men speak of their sins to God; Jesus spoke to Him of His " glory." Sinless Himself, He claimed authority to forgive the sins of others. It will be

well worth their while who have not recognised the Divine glory of Jesus to consider these marvellous things.

Correspondent with His claim of a celestial origin was the indefinable wonderfulness and transcendent impressiveness of His personality. This does not admit of analysis, but flashes out in mysterious ways throughout the gospels. Comparing higher with lower, one might illustrate it by means of the magnetic personality which we sometimes find in great men; but the difference is as between the light of heaven and that of earth. The cry, "Never man spake like this Man," revealed a flash of splendour which was repeated in many ways during His life. It was manifest in the slinking away of the accusers of the guilty woman, and in the flight of the desecrators of the temple. It was manifest when those who came to seize Him in Gethsemane fell back to the ground at the sound of His voice. It was a spell which kept the hands of His enemies impotent until "His hour was come." There was shed from Him a mysterious awe as from the presence of a Divinity.

Correspondent with His claim to be of supernatural essence was the constant and easy plane of supernatural power on which His life moved. Those who desire to deny the Divinity of Jesus naturally and necessarily strive to discredit the

records of His miraculous deeds. But the attempt must fail for want of adequate grounds. The miraculous deeds take their place with all the necessity of truth in His miraculous life. It is not the works that have to be explained away, but the transcendent Worker. The narratives are simple and unstrained, recording what had come to be recognised by the people as the expression of the everyday life and power of Jesus. His mighty works were not an occasional garb of pomp, but the constant essence of His daily life. It was the Jesus who was manifested to the people that was simply recorded. Without this constant energy of supernatural power, He would not have been Jesus at all, but would have changed into another personality. It was the ordinary expression of His recognised personality, to give sight to the blind, to heal the sick, and to raise the dead. And when He stood above the forces of Nature, and hushed them into obedience to His voice, the note of power entered harmoniously into the supernatural music of His life, and demanded no change in men's conception of His glory.

The manifestation of His supernatural power assumed yet deeper and subtler forms than these. For it did not appear as selected points or threads in His life, but as the seamless weft of His being. His essential attitude towards men was that of a supernatural being. From all men He simply and

calmly demanded unqualified submission and homage. Of all men beloved of God He is Master and Lord. Of all the nations of the world He is both Redeemer and Judge, and His verdict shall be final as the judgment of God. Above the penitent He stands, and exercises the Divine prerogative of the forgiveness of sins. He breathed the perpetual consciousness of absolute life. His normal self-consciousness found expression in such utterances as these: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am come that ye may have life, and that ye may have it abundantly." "I am the resurrection and the life." In the shadow of the cross He affirmed with unspeakable majesty: "I have authority to lay down my life, and I have authority to take it up again." After this came as the certain sequel His complete and glorious resurrection from the dead.

Correspondent with His claim to have come from the Father as the direct expression of the Father's life was His immediate and complete knowledge of the heart of God. The secrets of eternity were all wide open to His gaze. Jesus cannot be classed with students of truth, who win the light by laborious degrees. Nor can He be classed with intuitionists and visionaries who have received sudden gleams of brilliant light, for in such instances the flashes of light have always been chequered with corresponding shadows. Such im-

mediate beams have always been handicapped by the human infirmities and obscurities, and even eccentricities, of the imperfect receiver. But in Jesus the light is pure and perfect and constant. He talked of the most awful mysteries of eternity, and of the profoundest secrets of the heart of God, with the directness and simplicity of a little child. He was the Light of the world, because He and the Father are One, and He knew the whole secret of the heart of the Father. In Him was life, even the life of the Deity, and the life was the light of men.

The failure to behold the glory of Christ is, therefore, not primarily an intellectual, but rather a moral, failure. He is as manifest to simple and true spiritual vision as the sun is to the vision of our physical sense. The pure in heart, who are able to see God, apprehend His glory in the Son, who is the " effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very impress of His person." The vision may be hidden from the " wise and prudent," but is revealed unto " babes." Hence to reject the transcendent glory of the Christ marks fatal moral failure. " I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : for except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." In this is the condemnation, that the Light is come into the world, and that men love darkness rather than the Light, " because their deeds are evil." To know the secret of Jesus is to know the secret of God, and this secret is eternal life.

VI

THE VISION OF THE RISEN CHRIST

And last of all He appeared to me also, as to one untimely born.—1 Cor. xv. 8.

SO much has been written on the historical witness to the resurrection of Jesus on the part of those to whom He appeared "during the forty days," that it has seemed well to me to approach this great fact from a different, although it may seem at first sight a smaller, angle. This does not in the least degree imply a doubtful appreciation of the power of the arguments which have been customarily advanced in evidence of the historical character of this crucial event in the process of human redemption. On the contrary, these arguments have not yet been in any serious danger from the assaults of scepticism. There has been a great show of demolishing them, but the assaults have been inherently impotent. Unbelief has run through all the foolish gamut of groundless invention with the view of discrediting the simple and straightforward records of those who saw their risen Lord. These inventions, as is ever the case in the long run with schools of speculation, are

mutually destructive. If one waits long enough, truth is vindicated without firing a shot, for the enemies soon begin to turn their guns upon one another. We now look with equanimity upon the suppositions which lie broken and ridiculous in the track of scepticism. We smile when we remember that one section protested that Jesus never actually died on the cross, but that He was carried away in a swoon, and was thus able to cheat the whole world with a merely apparent resurrection. With equal vehemence and groundlessness another section declared that the brave disciples stole His body from the grave, and then in a fit of pious fraud gave out that He had risen from the dead. Then some heaven-born genius in the psychology of scepticism made the remarkable discovery that all the disciples were suddenly smitten with incurable hysteria, and that they all began to see the risen Jesus through this medium of delirious hallucination. And all the while, in opposition to this flitting and changing nonsense of sceptical invention, the simple and convincing records of the New Testament and the majestic progress of the kingdom of the risen Christ have calmly and convincingly borne testimony to the resurrection of the Lord of men.

The only way of getting rid of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus is by generally discrediting

the authenticity and trustworthiness of the New Testament records. The message of the resurrection can fall only when the whole Christian edifice falls upon the ruins of its sacred documents. It is in this direction that scepticism is now, with its old armoury of supposition, invention, and speculation, busy in directing its attack. Into that labyrinthine morass it is not my business now to enter. But it is satisfactory to see that already the combatants are turning their artillery upon one another, and that each camp can see the folly of the other's speculations, although it fails to see the folly of its own. Already the "liberal" and the "mythical" schools are soundly belabouring one another. We can wait for the issue. The scepticism that has failed in the smaller attacks upon the Christian faith will still more disastrously fail in its bigger and wilder venture.

The Apostle Paul and his writings are bound to serve as a central point in the battle of faith. If any conceivable literary, historical, and psychological criteria are valid, then Paul's great central epistles give a solid rock of fact and history which nothing can shake. This is, I believe, conceded by all except the few who are wedded to speculative extravagance of the extremest kind. As far as I am concerned, I have no more doubt of it than I have of the sun in the heavens. When speculative extravagance has woven its own shroud, Paul's

great central historical and intensely personal writings will remain an unshaken rock upon which to reconstruct critically the citadel of truth out of the critical debris which is being flung about in confusion at the present time.

This is one reason, and maybe a sufficient reason, for my present appeal to Paul on the resurrection of Jesus. Another reason may be found in the persistent assertion of modern criticism that Paul's gospel was essentially founded in an "ideal" Christ, and not in a "historical" Jesus. This affirmation illustrates the vicious process of fastening upon one set of assertions, and ignoring on the other side even facts that are fundamental. For all the apostles the historical Jesus was a revelation of the ideal and eternal Christ, but each of the two sides was necessary to the other. The redemptive work of the historical Jesus was the basis of the redemptive power and glory of the heavenly Christ, and all was possible because this Jesus the Christ was identical with the "Word who was in the beginning with God, and was God." Paul's gospel is so essentially founded on the historical Jesus that he writes to the Corinthians: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins." Paul's whole ministry stands or falls with the truth of the gospel records of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. His gospel was not primarily

that of Christ Glorified, but of Christ Crucified. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day."

No modern can enter more profoundly into the power and privilege of the spiritual perception of the Son of God than Paul could do. To know the eternal Christ by the power of faith was his perennial joy. But he also knew that the authority for his message lay in the historical facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He did not weave an ideal Christ out of his own inner consciousness, but accepted with joy the Christ revealed in Jesus who died and rose again. Paul's ideal Christ was Jesus interpreted and glorified. Hence he regarded the evidence for the resurrection of Christ as fundamental to his gospel, and it is with triumph, albeit with humility, that he is able to range himself with the witnesses who had actually seen the risen Lord. It is not unreasonably, therefore, that we turn to Paul in the present discourse to examine his testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

I. Paul regarded the appearance of the risen Christ to him as a necessary condition of his place in the apostleship. "Then He appeared to all the apostles. And last of all (*sc.* the apostles) He appeared to me also, as to one untimely born."

Paul regarded the appearance of Jesus to him

on the way to Damascus as essentially one with the pre-ascension appearances to the earlier apostles. As he was last of the apostles, and definitely added his name to the list of the chosen band, so the Master appeared to him last of all, to qualify him for being one of the witnesses to His resurrection from the dead. The appearance at Damascus was the last of the significant series of manifestations which began on the day of His resurrection, appeared to cease on His ascension, but flashed forth once more in a wonderful form to call Saul the persecutor to become the apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul clearly admits that this appearance lacked some of the elements possessed by the earlier manifestations of the risen Christ. It was not only that He appeared to Paul last of all, but there had been an important break in the series before the last brilliant link was added to complete the chain. This last manifestation was given to Paul, " as to one untimely born." It was given out of time, and was marked by the incompleteness which is associated with untimeliness. Paul was not " born " into the apostleship in a regular way, and could not share the regular manifestation. He was like one born untimely, and had to be treated on special and irregular lines.

The contrast which the apostle modestly draws between himself and the other apostles is obvious.

The appearances of the Saviour to them had some common and familiar elements which were absent from the vision and witness of Paul. The form in which Jesus manifested Himself during the forty days was obviously different from the form of blinding glory in which He appeared to Paul. The risen Jesus was in startling respects similar to the Jesus who had been crucified and laid in the grave. He walked and talked with His disciples, in some respects as in the days before His crucifixion. He told them to handle Him, and see that He was not a disembodied ghost, but still their embodied Master. He showed them His hands and feet, with the prints of the nails still to be discerned. He even partook of food before them. They were thus able to trace their crucified Lord by regular stages of identification along well-defined planes of investigation. Such elements as these were shorn away for the " untimely born " apostle. For him the risen Lord descended from heaven in a flash of glory which wrought blindness in his gazing eyes.

Yet, for all that, Paul knew that it was a genuine manifestation of the personal risen Jesus, that it was one in essence with the previous manifestations, and that it was completely valid for his commission as an apostle and witness to the resurrection. Paul is sacredly reticent with regard to the central wonder of the vision of Damascus. He tells us of the light which He saw, and of the

voice which he heard. But it is indirectly we learn from him the glory of the Jesus whom he saw. One thing is clear. It was the Lord in His body of glory that fixed Himself in Paul's mind and heart and imagination from that time onward. It was made clear to Paul that he had looked upon his corporeally risen Lord.

Those who credit Paul with having created an idealised or ideational Christ will do well to note his emphasis upon the risen body of the Saviour. Paul's Christ is the Christ of the resurrection and of the resurrection body. His vision of Christ in heaven is the vision of a glorified human body, and not the abstraction of an invisible Deity, or of the pure and unimaginable glory of spirit. Paul's vision of the risen Christ had not been less concrete than that of the other disciples before the glory of His ascension. Like the others, he could say, "I have seen the Lord." This vision of the Christ gave similar concreteness to his conception of the future glory of the saints. The corporeally manifested Christ demanded a corporeally manifested glory of the saints. "Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." The great resurrection vision of the fifteenth chapter of

first Corinthians is imbedded in Paul's vision of the corporeally risen Christ on the way to Damascus.

Paul was both too sagacious and too honest to make his apostleship depend upon an experience of which he was not absolutely certain. He would not have sought to deceive himself any more than he would have sought to deceive others. If his vision was not such as would bring him into line with the other apostles as a witness to the corporeal resurrection of Jesus, he would certainly have abandoned his claim to rank with them as an apostle and witness to the resurrection. This was a crucial matter, and nowhere is this great soul more sure of his ground than in this particular. He had looked upon the risen Lord as certainly as the others had done. "If Christ hath not been raised, we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ."

It is to be noted that Paul strictly distinguishes between this personal and corporeal appearance of Christ and all other kinds of visions and experiences which came to him in abundance. So far was his mind from being liable to confusion by trance or hallucination, that he was accustomed to analyse his varied experiences in what we may fairly call a scientific manner. His spiritual experience of the indwelling and fellowship of Christ was of the most intense kind. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth

in me." But this was always recognised by him as a mighty process within his own spirit, and never imaginatively projected into the semblance of an objective vision. He records a trance into which he was cast, and applies to the statement of it psychological deliberation. He marks its subtle evasiveness, and tries to bring it down to definition. Very soberly he concludes, " Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." He received wonderful manifestations of the spiritual presence of his Lord, in some marvellous way materialising itself into vivid message and power. Thus we read in Acts xxiii. 11 : " And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, ' Be of good cheer ; for as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.' " Yet even this intense vision of the Christ was rigidly assigned to its true category, a feat possible only to an analytic mind of the first order. It was once only that the corporeally risen Christ appeared to him in His glorified resurrection body, and commissioned him henceforth to be an apostle and a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Although this appearance of the risen Lord to Paul lacked certain elements that pertained to the earlier appearances, yet, on the other hand, it had special value and significance of its own. That which appeared to be a subsidiary arrangement to

meet the case of one "untimely born" was, in reality, an exceptional manifestation for the making of an exceptional apostle. The apostle was "irregular" only by convention. By Divine appointment he was in the regular line of election and apostleship. He was exceptionally treated for an exceptional end. He was needed to complete the tale of the apostles, and his vision of the Christ was needed to complete the grand evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It was well that after His ascension the veil should be rent once more, and that He who had manifested Himself in the body with the wounded hands and feet and side should manifest Himself to the last and greatest of the apostles in that body of glory which His people shall share with Him in the day of their resurrection. The manifestation from heaven completed the manifestations upon the earth.

II. This manifestation of Jesus to Paul had precisely the same effect upon Paul's faith and life as the other appearances had upon the other disciples.

Paul made the corporeal resurrection of Jesus a fundamental element in his teaching. The essential similarity of the manifestations comes here dramatically to view. Peter and John and the others saw their risen Lord, and immediately went forth with the greatest boldness to proclaim His resurrection from the dead as the central

manifestation of His power and glory. Paul saw Jesus on the way to Damascus, and he also went forth to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and to preach his message of the resurrection of believers into the glory of their Lord. In each case conviction was absolute, and it was no small matter to convince the mind of Paul, that concentrated analyst and logician.

So convincing was the evidence for Paul that he held his character for truthfulness to be bound up with his affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus. He could not admit any doubt or insufficiency in the manifestation. If there were, then he must have stated it. He knew that the manifestation left no room for wavering. It was so absolutely certain that he was willing and ready to be branded as a false witness if Christ had not been raised from the dead.

This vision of the risen Christ captured his whole life even as the other disciples had been captured after the resurrection. We know with what power and love the other disciples devoted themselves to their Master after they had seen Him risen from the dead. A new heroism immediately leaped into their lives which can be explained only by their certain knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus. The same phenomenon is seen in the case of Paul Up to the hour of the vision he was a persecutor and blasphemer ; from the hour of the manifesta-

tion, all in all for Jesus Christ. Henceforth he counted all things but dung that he might win Christ. It was henceforth his life to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Henceforth he knew of a certainty that Christ had risen from the dead. We can understand these things, if these men, one and all, looked upon the risen Christ. Otherwise they are a mystery which no ingenuity can explain.

Here is surely something to sober the mind of the wildest sceptic. If the character of Paul be reasonably deduced from his recognised writings, we know what a great strong, sane, spiritual man he was. By any reasonable method of deduction, we should find Paul to be one of the last men to launch all his hopes for time and eternity upon an uncertainty. It was no will-o'-the-wisp that induced him to forsake the lofty religion of his fathers, and all his hopes in the bosom of his own people, to become a persecuted follower of the despised Nazarene, and to load himself with suffering and labours for the Jesus whom he had persecuted. It is no small evidence of the resurrection of Jesus that this man looked upon the risen Christ, and was satisfied for ever.

This vision of Paul is, of course, only the closing vision of the great series upon which the personal witness to the resurrection of Jesus depends. But, as the closing vision and as the vision of the

greatest of the apostles, it has special significance, and for those who can read into the heart of an exceptional conjunction, special convincingness. When that Damascus vision is set at the end of the great series, on the one hand, and when it is set in the wonderful character and life of the apostle to the Gentiles, on the other, it carries a conviction which can only fail to be felt by those who clothe Paul with characteristics which his writings utterly deny. When Paul says solemnly, and stakes all his life upon it, " And last of all He appeared to me also," no reasonable man can remain unimpressed.

The full proof of the resurrection of Jesus lies in an accumulation of evidence. There is a great array of important witnesses, with many contingent proofs, and nothing but the baseless presuppositions of naturalism to oppose to them. Beyond these there are the mighty spiritual forces which have ever since been operative in the name of the Lord Jesus. These and other proofs are not in the purpose of the present discourse. Taken together, they may well confound the voices of scepticism. But it is no mean evidence in itself to know the man who saw the heavenly vision clearly on the way to Damascus, to see the calm confidence of his great after life, and to join with him in singing his great refrain : " But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of those that are asleep."

VII

THE RESURRECTION BODY OF JESUS

When therefore it was evening, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had said this, He shewed unto them His hands and His side.—JOHN xx. 19, 20.

THE revelation given in the New Testament of the nature of the corporeal form in which Jesus appeared to His disciples during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension affords many points of high interest, and strongly attracts consecrated thought and study. Yet it must not be supposed that its only, or its main, attraction is one of intellectual or speculative curiosity. The minuteness and suggestiveness of the portrayal is proof that it has an important place in Christian evidence and instruction. It is a link in the chain of human redemption, a ray of that light which reveals "the things which God hath laid up for those that love Him." Coming between the resurrection from the dead and the ascension into glory, it belongs in a special way to the great proof of the resurrection of the Son of Man, and links itself both with the sacred form that

suffered on the cross and with the body of glory which for ever triumphs over death. It is clearly a link in the chain of the mysteries of grace.

It is important to note clearly the distinction between the evidential body of the forty days and the body of glory which Jesus wears at the right hand of the Father. We have already had to notice this in our discourse on Paul's vision of the risen Christ. There can be no mistaking the vast interval between the form of corporeal glory in which Jesus shone upon Saul the persecutor and the form which Mary mistook for the gardener, or that which accompanied the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Yet I think it has been common to picture the body of Christ as immediately transformed and glorified on the morning of His resurrection from the grave, and as being then in no way different from the body of His celestial glory.

This misapprehension has led to numerous difficulties and to other misapprehensions. On such a view the accounts of Christ's appearances to His disciples, and of the means by which He convinced them of His identity, become insoluble enigmas. It is impossible for these manifestations not to have a certain element of unreality about them. We are assured that the body of glory is a spiritual and not a natural body, and that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. And yet Jesus says to His disciples, " A spirit hath not flesh

and bones, as ye see Me have." To think of these physical marks as supernaturally induced for the purpose of convincing the disciples, is to destroy their evidential power. The power of the evidence lies in its simplicity. We are not in the realm of magic, but of simple fact. The body which the disciples felt, and in which they saw the prints of the crucifixion, was precisely the body which He had brought out of the grave, and which He chose to retain until the evidence of His resurrection was so far completed. All ingenious explanations are beside the mark. It was in the body which had "flesh and bones," and still bore the physical prints of the nails and the wound in the side, that Jesus rose out of the grave, and it was in this He gave His disciples proof of His resurrection.

On the other hand, the failure to note the distinction between the resurrection body and the ascension body has led to somewhat crude pictures of the glorified Christ. Deeming the two identical, some have transferred to the glorified body of Christ the physical marks which belonged only to His temporary manifestation upon the earth. They still imagine that He bears the print of the nails, and that the redeemed will behold the scar of the wound in His side. The well-known hymn-line, "Five bleeding wounds He bears," gives a representation which has probably been taken by many in quite a literal sense. For if His glorified resur-

rection body bore the wounds during the forty days, why not until time shall be no more? A clear note of distinction between the two stages of the transformation of His victorious physical nature would give reality to the post-resurrection manifestations of Jesus, and at the same time prevent the crude materialising of the " body of His glory."

I. The nature of the post-resurrection body of Jesus.

The records show that it had substantial points of identity with His natural pre-crucifixion body, and yet was marked by some suggestive points of mysterious difference.

The indications of change in His physical life are not forced upon us obtrusively as the indications of identity are, but they are not the less manifest in subtle touches all through the narrative. He does not dwell with His disciples as formerly, but comes and goes in an atmosphere of mystery. His comparative aloofness may, no doubt, be explained on other grounds, but it fits in with other elements in this mysterious atmosphere of change. There are hints that some ethereal change had passed over His countenance and form. Luke tells us that when He joined the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, " their eyes were holden that they should not know Him " ; but this tardiness to recognise the presence of the risen Jesus was common to all the appearances. Mary Magdalene failed to recog-

nise Him until He spoke her name, no doubt in some old familiar tones of holy love. Even when He stood before His disciples, " they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit." When Jesus called to His disciples from the shore of the lake, even John did not recognise His voice, and only knew it was the Lord on the performance of a characteristic miracle. A resurrection change had come upon Him, subtle and wonderful, unanalysable and inexplicable, yet divinely suggestive of His great victory over death and the grave.

On the other hand, we find in His resurrection body striking elements of physical identity. These elements were all the more necessary on account of the change with which death and resurrection had touched Him. Those who might otherwise deem Him a ghostly apparition come to deceive them could find the proof they needed when " He showed them His hands and His side." Yet it must not be supposed that these features were merely simulated in order to establish faith. That also would have been a species of deception which would have vitiated proof. This, and no other, was the body in which He rose. For forty days He bore the body which was in these remarkable elements identical with the body in which they crucified Him. For forty days, in spite of some wonderful and ethereal change which was also

manifest, He remained "in the flesh," and bore for the proof of His resurrection the scars of His physical sufferings. For forty days He was able to say, "Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." Afterwards, He was received into glory.

II. The significance and importance of these aspects of Christ's resurrection body.

The dual aspect was peculiarly fitted to form the central evidence of His genuine resurrection from the dead. It gave the proof of actual death and resurrection in the clearest and most comprehensive fashion. If Jesus had immediately appeared in His body of glory, having set aside all physical identity with the body of His flesh, what we may call the scientific evidence of His resurrection would have been missing. There are those who in the most lordly fashion decree such evidence unnecessary. They do not require a corporeal resurrection of any kind, but speak in grandiloquent phrases of a supposed spiritual resurrection, or rather survival, of Jesus. Neither His physical nor His spiritual body is of any account to them. They are all for spirit, and nothing else. This generalised and etherealised faith is, in practice, closely akin to the mind of those who etherealise the historical Jesus out of existence, and reduce the concrete records of His redeeming work to a mythological fountain of

spiritual ideas. But it is the concrete realities of the religion of Jesus that are its specific glory. In Him all the deepest spiritual hopes of men have become historical facts, removing all mere subjectivity and uncertainty for ever. In Him is life, and the life is the light of men. The Christ-life is henceforth the sure basis of the Christ-idea, and the hope of immortality sings its song of triumph in His empty grave.

The resurrection of Jesus belonged to the concrete facts of His redemptive work, and needed the proof which can be furnished by the commonplace investigation of facts. Ordinary human beings, at any rate, are in need of such proofs. And it is just these evidences of the resurrection that have compelled idealistic dreamers from time to time to return to the concrete reality of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. No subtleties of philosophy can etherealise away the solid fact of the resurrection of Jesus, while Thomas called Didymus, the dogmatic scientist, conducts his examination of the risen body of his Master, and the Master assists the investigations and conclusions of the whole Board of Examiners by showing them His wounded hands and feet and side. Were it not for this concrete and scientific evidence, the spiritualisers of every generation would have had freer scope for their butterfly wings. It is little wonder that so much effort has been expended in seeking to discredit

the evidence of those men and women who saw their risen Lord, and surely identified His crucified body by the prints of the nails and other physical identities which left no room for doubt, except to those to whom scientific proof has no meaning, save when it helps their own theories. Unless the concrete facts of redemption were made sure, the Master knew that men such as we are could have no solid ground of faith on which to rest.

Nor is it difficult to see the easy rebound from abstract spiritualising to unfaith. In the abstract spaces of spiritualising proof would be lacking, and it would not be long before scepticism began to give forth its voice. Out of the subjective abyss the mind would begin to question, "Did Jesus rise, after all? Or is all our spiritualising an empty dream?" Once more the bewildered mind of man would call for proof, and the would-be Swedenborgs would become matter-of-fact and common-sense Thomases, saying, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Man may soar as high as he will in the region of spiritual feeling and intuition, but at the bottom he must have a definite foundation of concrete fact. Failing this, he will always be in danger of drooping a weary wing, and of falling into the abyss of uncertainty and unbelief. Above all, the resurrection of Christ as a

fact needed to be firmly established, and the identities of His resurrection body with His crucified body furnished the necessary proofs of fact with scientific assurance. Upon this evidence other proofs rise in ascending tiers of light.

On the other hand, the new features and attributes which were discernible in His resurrection body served as important factors in the proof of His actual death and resurrection. Scepticism has two main arrows in its quiver. On the one hand, it suggests that Jesus never rose from the grave ; on the other, it suggests that He never died at all. The identity of His body after the resurrection disproved the former of these. The ethereal difference in His body after the resurrection refutes the latter. His appearance could not possibly have been borne by one who had just managed to escape with his life, and had come with his wounds fresh upon him into the presence of the disciples. It was not mere identity that they saw, but identity with a wonderful difference. Something had happened to set the wounds in a halo of glory. He did not come like one escaping from brutality, but like one ascending from a great victory, trailing clouds of glory as He came. He had undergone such a change as could only be explained by the majesty of a triumphant death and the splendour of a glorious resurrection. He had passed through avenues of light, being beautified and transformed as He

passed. The light of another world was upon Him. He was the same Jesus, yet another. He carried His wounds, but they were upon His body like stars in the sky. He showed them His hands and His feet, but around Him was the aureole of a new and mysterious life.

Near as He was to them in these post-resurrection days, He was yet, from the nature of the case, gradually receding from them, gradually moving to the hour of His complete departure from them. His corporeal nature belonged to both worlds, partly to the life He had been living, partly to the glory to come. The first linked Him to them for the forty days, but the second tended to veil Him from them. It was not like the old days of His flesh when John leaned upon His bosom. The energy and glory of His eternal splendour were beginning to claim Him, and He came and went in a mist of wonder. The majesty of death and the majesty of life laid their combined crown upon His brow. At last the full glory blazed. He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

III. The light which is shed by this revelation upon our own physical destiny.

The physical conditions revealed by our Lord's appearances during the forty days are peculiarly important as a light upon the physical destiny of believers. The vision of the body of glory blinds us with excess of light, even when it fills us with joy

and induces us to cry with Paul: "And when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." But in the post-resurrection manifestations, we see the victorious physical nature take up its powers, as it were, one by one, and watch it deliberately unfold its potential energies. It is hard to examine the naked sun, but, if we can cut off its blazing rays by some opaque veil, we can seek to detail some of its manifestations. To be transformed into the likeness of His glory, it will be sufficient to see Him as He is; but for the studious examination and understanding of the glory of our coming physical life in His likeness, it is better to look at Him before He has swallowed up the powers of His resurrection body in the exceeding glory of His heavenly life.

Our Lord's post-resurrection appearances emphasise the reality of the body that is to be, the body of our resurrection life. We see our Lord's body in its transition from the earthly to the heavenly, and find that no jot of reality is disappearing. A change in kind is beginning to be apparent, as the coming glory casts its luminous shadow before, but the reality remains undiminished. It is an evolution of corporeal reality that we are witnessing, not an evolution into vague incorporeality. The physical or corporeal nature is holding its own in the victorious life of the risen Lord.

This is all in line with the concrete comprehensiveness of the Christian revelation. The tendency of philosophic speculation in religion is to abstraction. When philosophy does not crystallise everything into matter, it evaporates everything into spirit. But Christianity holds and conserves life in its simple and sublime concreteness, and gives happy continuity to experience and hope. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life." Man, in his complex and concrete totality of body, soul, and spirit is marked for glory. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. The life beyond is to be a development of the life that now is. "That which drew from out the boundless deep" must "turn again home," but not to mere boundlessness. When this earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved, we shall need a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. When we are away from home from the present body, we shall need to be at home with the Lord. There can be no eternal homeland for us unless we can say with the concreteness of Browning:

> "Then a light, then thy breast:
> O thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again,
> And—with God be the rest."

Our Lord's post-resurrection appearances foreshadow some of the powers of the resurrection body

Even in this transition period new powers begin to manifest themselves, albeit only in subtle glimpses. There is something remarkably different from that physical condition in which He journeyed in physical weariness from place to place, and needed the refreshing balm of sleep to knit together the energies of the flagging body. It is true that He had always possessed a startling power of subordinating the demands of the body to His Divine mission. It was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. Once He walked on the waves of the sea, and once He flashed out ethereal glory on the mount of Transfiguration. But the post-resurrection appearances reveal a new normal phase of physical power. He comes to the disciples and leaves them while the doors are shut. He does not need the regular sustenances of man's ordinary physical life, nor a couch or resting-place on which to repose a weary head. Transcendent powers and untiring energies are suggested, powers to which no standard limits apply, a new freedom belonging to a more wonderful life. The glimpse is inspiring. It makes us long to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

Our Lord's post-resurrection body throws an incidental light on the present condition of the blessed dead in its relation to the final glory of their resurrection. The analogy must not be pressed too far, yet there is a transitional character in each case

through which illumination may be conveyed. The blessed dead do not carry their body of the tomb along with them, as Jesus took His body out of the grave. For us, the dust returns to dust, and the daisies grow above the old earthly tabernacle. Yet for us, too, there will be real continuity, but the change is differently effected. We shall not bear the old body of the flesh with its scars upon it, for we have no longer need to appear to those who are upon the earth. But the blessed dead are like the risen Saviour in this respect: Even as He looked forward to the complete glory of the ascension to the right hand of the Father, so the blessed dead are looking forward to the complete glory of His final appearing. We may be sure that they are already invested with some marvellous powers, and move with larger and unwearying strides in a wider world. But the great ascension day is still before them, when the Lord at His glorious appearing will invest all His people, the quick and the dead, with the fullness of their resurrection glory. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: for their works follow with them." True, true, gloriously true. And yet "we wait for a Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."

VIII

THE LORD OF HADES

In which also He went and preached (or, made proclamation) to the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.

1 Peter iii. 19, 20.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not. I am the First and the Last and the Living One. And I became dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.—Revelation i. 17, 18.

FOR the Christian believer the second of our texts has no difficulty. It epitomises in words that read like a flow of divinest music the cardinal facts of human redemption by the Son of God. The Lord Jesus declares His own Divine glory and His self-humiliation for the salvation of men. It is substantially the voice which John repeats in the beginning of his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." In our text Jesus in John's vision declares Himself to be the First and the Last and the Living One. Putting this into our modern form of rendering ideas, we may transmute it thus: "I am before all things,

I am the goal of all things, and I am transcendent over time and death." In a different form of words, the same qualities or attributes are given to God the Father in the eighth verse of the same chapter: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty."

This glorious Christ, having declared His eternal glory, proclaims His great self-humiliation for the work of redemption. The "Living One" "became dead." This is the mystery of atonement. The very "Life" went down into death. This Divine paradox of love and grace was the essential message of the first voice of Christianity from the lips of Peter: "Ye killed the Prince of Life." But they were able to kill the "Living One," because He "became dead." He "had authority to lay down His life, and he had authority to take it up again." The "Living One" became dead, in order that He might destroy the power of death. Death destroyed all others of the sons of men, but the "Living One" was "found in fashion as a man" in order to destroy death. When other men died, death triumphed. When the "Living One" died, death was defeated and vanquished. The Living One came out from death with the keys of Death and Hades in His victorious hand, and with the power of life for evermore.

The former of our two texts has been the conun-

drum of commentators and theologians. Some have sought to press into it more than it can naturally bear, and others have tried to evade its plain and obvious meanings. Our present purpose is to set it side by side with the clearer passage, and to expound what is common to both of them, using the clear meanings of the one text to illumine the obscurer reference of the other. The central revelation common to both passages is the Lordship of Jesus in the world of the dead. As His body was master of the grave, so His Spirit was Lord of the unseen world, and passed through the secret of Hades as its Monarch. These two things represent the two sides of His complete victory over death. His body broke the bands of the grave, and His Spirit took command of the power of Hades. His Soul was not left in Sheol, nor did His body see corruption. On the resurrection morning He held the keys of Death and of Hades.

I. Jesus entered the domain of Death by deliberate purpose and self-surrender.

There can be no doubt or quibble about the significance of the words, "I am the Living One, and I became dead." The context shows that the word "became" indicates a voluntary act. The natural and necessary thing for the "Living One" was life; death could not come by necessity, but only of choice and deliberate purpose. Nor can this statement be set aside as the picturesque and

hyperbolical language of an apocalyptic book. It is in accord with the whole representation of Jesus given both in the records of His life and in His utterances concerning Himself. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." "I am the resurrection and the Life." "I am the way, the truth, and the Life." Wherever He speaks of His coming death, He adds His power to rise again in His determined time, thus representing death as subject to Him, and not in any degree as His master. He deliberately makes death the instrument of His redemptive purpose. He, the Living One, became dead. In this representation of the Christ great conclusions lie.

We perceive that Jesus could not die by the law of natural human mortality. The deduction that all men are mortal stops short of the "Son of Man." I know that this teaching will be resented, perhaps even scorned, by some who make a mere man of the Lord Jesus, but, for all that, it is written in clear lines all over His wonderful life. He is everywhere seen as the "Living One," over whom death has no power. Even as His Divinity has become human, so His humanity is Divine. Whatever He touches leaps into life. He is Master of all the destructive forces of nature. He touches the deaf, and they hear; the blind, and they see; the dumb,

and they speak; the sick, and they are healed; the dead, and they awake into life. He was Life to the last pulse of His physical being. No seed of death could lurk in any recess of His holy nature. On the Mount of Transfiguration He had already suffused His body with heavenly glory, save that He chose to doff the white robe of immortality, in order to wear for humanity the crimson robe of the death of the cross. The Living One "became dead."

The death to which He surrendered Himself could only be accomplished by the hostility and malignity of sin. The living Redeemer could not die except by the hands of sinful men. Some of the curious speculations of to-day that would declare the death of the cross unnecessary are singularly blind to the inward meaning of the death of Jesus. If He had died in any other way than by the hands of His enemies, they tell us, it would have been equally good for us. But how otherwise could the Living and the Holy One have died? It was predetermined, not only by the counsel of God, but also by the very nature of sin, that when the Holy One should come to destroy the sin of the world, that sinful world, in all the fury of its satanic centre, would turn its rage upon Him, to destroy Him, and would destroy Him as far as it had the power. Only the seed of the serpent could bruise the heel of the holy Seed. It was

necessary that He should challenge all the concentrated hell of sin that held humanity in its thrall, and bear all the weight of its hate and malign power. He stepped into the centre of humanity's sin and curse, and bore its strangling coils around His life, in order that He might thus destroy it once for all.

Clearly, then, the "death of the cross" was immeasurably more than the death of the body. It was the death grapple of the Living One with the sin of the world. The body of the Living One could not have been surrendered, except in some tremendous tragedy that affected the very centre of His life. In the light of the deathless power of Jesus, the eliminative explanations which are given of His death look trivial. The martyr is one whose life is taken from him by those whom he has no power to resist, for he surrenders but a mortal body. Yet there are those who would class Jesus no higher than the martyr. Some inconsequently declare that the death of Jesus was just a manifestation of love. But, when we ask wherein the love lies, we are forced back again upon the bare idea of martyrdom, and His death becomes no more an expression of the love of God or man than that of any other martyr. Surely this is trifling with the great record. The Son of God who said, "I and My Father are One," is found in unutterable agony, praying, "My Father, if it be possible,

let this cup pass from Me"; and later on the cross, crying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The Living One "became dead." Why this awful mystery of mysteries, unless "He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"? John the Baptist was greater than some who claim to belong to the kingdom of heaven, for he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

II. Jesus went into Death and Hades to become their Master on behalf of men.

It was not necessary for Him to seek the keys of Death and of Hades for Himself, for He was in Himself the Lord of Life, and Death and Hades were His vassals. It was humanity that had lost the keys, and was in bondage to Death and Hades, and it was for humanity, and as its representative, that Jesus "became dead," in order that He might "become alive again," and bear for us the keys of Death and Hades. "Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Because He was the "Living One," He broke their power, and they could not detain Him. It is a Divine paradox that the Lord of essential life

should enter into Death and Hades at all, but it would have been more than a paradox, it would have been the subversion of eternal truth and reason, if they had been able to detain Him. By voluntary surrender He entered into their domain, and by His will He burst their bands asunder and shattered their prison. They were compelled to admit into their stronghold one stronger than they, and they were conquered in their own citadel. They who had conquered millions were at last conquered for men by the Son of Man. With the majesty of invincible life all was measured out beforehand, not only the entrance into Death's domain, but also the rising on the third day. Conquering all the dark domain, He came forth bearing the keys of Death and of Hades. " I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

In Death and Hades we see Jesus making proclamation of His Lordship. The " keys of Hades " in the Book of Revelation serve to interpret the " proclamation to the spirits in prison " of Peter's epistle. Of course, the passage in Peter has often tempted to a number of other questions. Those who believe that the spirits in prison, or ward, were not unbelievers at the time of their death will still argue with those who think that the " prison " is a place of punishment for the ancient ungodly. Some will ingeniously carve out of the passage a hope of repentance in another world, and others

will, with less need of ingenuity, question the legitimacy of such a conclusion from this obscure passage. But with none of these things am I concerned at present. Whatever the details may mean, the central picture in the Petrine passage is the triumphant march of the crucified Jesus through the domain of Hades. He is there taking command of the keys. He has come as Lord of the citadel, and makes His proclamation as such to the spirits in ward. The Monarch has come to take possession.

The general effect of our Lord's establishment of His Messianic power in Hades is not doubtful, although some details must remain in obscurity. In this descent and proclamation and claim He effectively establishes Himself as Lord of the quick and the dead, the supreme Judge of the "spirits in ward," and the redeeming life-giving Saviour of the godly in the world of the dead. In His victorious presence the condemnation of evil must be confirmed, and the blessedness of the good made more vivid and articulate. Just as His coming into our earth shook our world with a new power, so His entry into Hades shook this shadowy realm with new forces. He grasped the keys of all Hades throughout all its mysterious boundaries, and not merely of a part of it. Therefore Peter writes only of a fraction of the whole "proclamation" and triumph, this portion having been chosen for the enforcement of a particular lesson—the lesson of

godly Noah's triumph over a turbulent and evil world. The Son of Man conquered the grave for the bodies of men, and took possession of Hades as Lord of the spirits of men. Therefore He will come to judge the quick and the dead alike. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.

Whatever the effect of Christ's descent into Hades was for the ungodly, it would seem that His presence gave a higher status and a more vivid consciousness of blessedness to the holy dead. This appears inevitable. The revelation of the Messiah must have been to them a revelation of the deeper meanings and glories of their immortal life. His coming would make them share in the new and splendid development of the kingdom of God which His coming involved. In the twilight land they too were waiting for His glory, and in His redemptive presence in the might of His victory they would rise into richer life. The godly of the old dispensation would be splendidly lifted into the glory of the New. Those who had been gathered to the " bosom of Abraham " would now know the higher blessedness of " being with Christ." The world of the dead had to be lifted into the new phase of Divine manifestation which had entered into the world of the living. This seems to be the reference of the majestic words of Jesus: " Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh,

and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." What might before by comparison be called "death" in Hades now leaps into "life" at the voice of the Son of God. This appears to be also the reference in the difficult closing portion of the well-known words of Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, even though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever *liveth* and believeth in Me shall never die." The first portion alludes to believers on earth, to whom physical death is still possible; the second to believers in Hades, who rise into emphatic life at the voice of Christ, and die no more for ever, but are blessed for evermore. Is not this also the intimation of the words: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, *from henceforth*"? A new era had dawned for Hades as well as for the earth. The godly dead welcomed the status of those on earth who cried: "We are willing rather to be away from home from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." A light was kindled in the homes of the blessed which they had not known before, and which must go on growing until it is finally interpreted and completed in the glory of "His appearing."

III. Jesus holds the keys of Death and Hades for the work of His kingdom. It is in the power of the keys that He sends His messages of authority

to the seven churches, and holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Because He had brought perfect life out of death, He is the Lord of Life to a world that has been dominated by Death and Hades. He gives all who trust in Him to share in His power of the keys. They die no more for ever.

In holding the keys of Death and Hades He gives spiritual and eternal life to all who will receive it. The essence of the Lord's victory over Death and Hades lies in His spiritual victory over the powers of moral evil. He was eternally the " Living One " in an essential sense ; He is now also the " Living One " in the redemptive sense. " As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." " As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom He will." Every attempt to make Jesus a mere Leader or Exemplar is an attempt to cover His transcendent claims with confusion, and to reduce His life-giving power to impotency. " Christ is our life " is the central note of the real evangel. Christ has conquered the powers by which we were held captive, and gives us to share that power by which He has conquered. He that believeth on Him has passed from death into life. Apart from Him we can do nothing. In His hands are the keys of life, and only He can open to us the portals into life's inheritance.

There is no way of salvation except in the old cry—

> "I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
> But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Jesus has nullified death for His people by the power of the keys, and filled the grave with glory. The grave is no longer a prison for the believer, but a mansion of which Jesus has the keys. The mischief with the grave, outside of the redemption by Christ, is, that man had forfeited the keys to satanic power. But Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and wrested the power from his hands on man's behalf. With the keys in the hands of the Redeemer, the grave has no longer any power to injure His people. The grave is now but a sleeping-chamber for His beloved, while they wait for the morning of glory in which the angels will be seen "seated in the vacant tomb."

In holding the keys of Death and Hades Jesus has given new beauty to the believer's hope in death. The best comment upon this fact will be found by comparing the hopes recorded in the Old Testament with the hopes which are recorded in the New. There was no exhilaration in the prospect held by the Old Testament saints at the approach of death. Often, in truth, the note was one of deprecation, and hope glimmered uncertainly in a shadowy world. But with the advent of Christ's redemptive Lordship of Death and Hades, the note

of hope undergoes a wonderful change. We find the first clear accent of it in our Lord's reply to the penitent thief: "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." The penitent, like the old-world saints, had looked forward through uncertain gloom to some distant hope: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." But the Master of Hades had come, and the perspective was changed. The hour of death leaped instantly into the hour of blessedness: "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." There is no need to quote the jubilant utterances of the New Testament writers further. From henceforth, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.

In holding the keys, Jesus holds in subjection, and will finally destroy, all the dark powers from which He wrested them. Death and Hades, completely vanquished by the Redeemer of men, shall be cast into the "lake of fire," which is the second death. Already have they been smitten as with death by His victorious might, when He despoiled them of their power and authority. But at the last, they shall be utterly overwhelmed and consumed in the unquenchable judgment of His glory. "The gates of Hades" cannot prevail against the Church of Christ, because their power has passed into the hands of the Lord of the Church. Evil cannot triumph. Its doom was sealed when

the victorious Christ passed into Death and Hades and broke their power. Only a temporary shadow of power remains for the forces of evil. Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? The crucial battle has been won, and the end is sure. They have no fear who can hear His voice : " I am the First and the Last and the Living One. And I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades."

IX

THE ASCENDED LORD

Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.—Acts II. 33.

WE live in the great interval, when so many are ready to say, Where is the promise of His coming? Unless our ears are well open, we may deem these times the centuries of silence and of a hidden Christ. While the Bridegroom tarries, we are in danger of falling into slumber. These are the times when long patience is required by those that watch for the King, and when the voice of the scorner is heard in the street. The days are gone when the Son of Man walked on the earth, and revealed His glory to those that had eyes to see His Divine splendour. Hope has painted on the firmament of the future the picture of His return to judge and reign upon the earth with power and great glory. But the days are long, and the world is impatient and fills the gap with its own devices and the tumult of its own wisdom. All things continue as they were, and they think that His place is vacant. We too shall faint unless we

know how to discern the present King. The faith of to-day cannot rest in the Jesus of two thousand years ago, or in the Jesus that will come one day in heavenly glory to judge the earth. The faith of to-day can be satisfied only by a present Christ. We can hold on only by looking unto Jesus, the reigning Christ of to-day.

At Pentecost Peter called the attention of the people to the immediate presence and power of Jesus. The apostle had fresh and beautiful memories of the Jesus of the flesh, the adored Lord whom he had known in his own Galilee. The hope of the Lord's glorious return was very vivid to the apostles and the Early Church. But the power to which Peter appealed was the manifested power of Christ then and there. The ascended Lord was not less but more operative than the earthly Jesus. The Christ in heaven was all the more powerfully upon the earth. The Christ exalted to God's right hand was all the more potently in the life of His people. There was no interval of vacancy. There was no diminution of the manifested power of the Lord. On the contrary, for those who could understand, the Lord was working in a new and more marvellous way, and revealing Himself in intenser forms to the faith of His people. "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear."

How are we to discern the presence and power of the Christ, for the sustenance of our faith "until He come"? It is certain that He is working not less manifestly and potently than in the hour of Pentecost and the days of the Early Church. His promise was not for an age, but for all time. "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Nor can the operation of His power have grown less with the lapse of the centuries, or the method of His work have fundamentally changed. A change in the form of His operations there may have been. Such a change we might reasonably expect with the changing conditions of men, and the changing knowledge and thoughts of new days. But in essence there can be only one kind of operation. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but, if I go away, I will send Him to you." The reigning Christ is known by the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. This dispensation began in the upper room, and occupies the whole of the interval until our Lord's return. If the Holy Spirit is upon us, we shall discern the working of our Lord in His reign from heaven, and shall perceive in essence what Peter saw when the Lord poured forth the Holy Ghost upon His people. Then to our glad eyes the centuries will be filled with the glory of our Lord.

I. The ascended Christ is developing His kingdom on the earth with complete authority and power.

It is as the Lord of redemption He is exalted and invested in heaven. His " exaltation by the right hand of God " is specifically Messianic exaltation, the establishment of His complete Messianic authority. Coincident with the completion of His exaltation is the completion of His Messianic power and resource, the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This completion of authority and power is for the purpose of most energetic exercise. It is the complete dynamic of the Redeemer for the achievement of His kingdom upon the earth. " Being by the right hand of God exalted," He receives the promise of the Holy Ghost. Receiving the promise of the Holy Ghost, He " pours it forth " upon the earth.

The essential concern of Jesus in heaven, therefore, is the establishment of His kingdom among men. Until the kingdom of redemption is complete, the vast energy of the ascended Christ is concentrated upon His work of grace. I know that the results of His Messianic power and glory are not to be confined to our earth or to the history of humanity. I know that " the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God," and that " the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." I know that " it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness

dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." I know that the work of human redemption in Christ has the further "intent, that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." But it is clear that our earth is the determining centre of this cosmic movement. Of course, the cheap and ignorant sneer is easy at the supposed extravagance of regarding our little planet as the centre of such a movement. Scepticism tries to bewilder us with a picture of mighty systems of worlds in comparison with which our little globe is but a speck, and to laugh us out of the thought that the earth can count so mightily in the purpose and work of God. Any man of just reasoning powers knows that all this kind of talk is beside the mark. We need not fall back upon the fact that an eminent scientific authority has recently put forward the thesis that our planet occupies a central position even in the material universe. Even if that were so, it would not entitle it to the occupation of a central position in the cosmic evolution of grace and truth. Nor does any manner of material position assigned to it disentitle it to such a significant

moral position. The reasons that have brought our planet and our human world into such a position belong to another universe of things, to a universe in which material position and magnitude do not count, and in which all is determined by the measureless potencies of sin and Divine grace.

The determining element lies in this, that "the Word, who was with God, and was God, became flesh, and dwelt among men"; that "He who was in the form of God, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man." "He laid not hold of angels, but He laid hold of the seed of Abraham." "Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself partook of the same." This mystery of God could clearly not be determined by any material considerations, but altogether by the play of spiritual forces. Such tremendous forces were found on this earth as drew the Son of God to become Son of Man. Here, then, is the focus of His cosmic work. Here is the central operation of His power for the accomplishment of His kingdom. His Messianic power and authority are concentrated upon the kingdom of His grace among men.

The exercise of the power of the ascended Lord is centred in the energies of the Holy Spirit. This was the manner of His energy at Pentecost, and this must be the manner of it to the end of time. But we must look for the essence of the manifesta-

tion of the Holy Spirit, and not for its temporary accidents. The sound as of a mighty rushing wind, and tongues parting asunder as of fire, and the mysterious speaking with other tongues, all this is variant form. When this had ceased, the essential power still remained, the inward energy of the Holy Ghost. The promise given by Jesus was one of inward power. After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye " shall receive power," dynamic force, inward potency of life. In the great promise of the Holy Spirit given by Jesus, as recorded in John's Gospel, the Paraclete is promised as the Spirit of truth and spiritual power. " Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth." " And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The manifestation of this power is continuous in the records of the Apostolic Church, not so much in its signs and wonders as in the holy power with which its teachers spoke, and in the spiritual energy of the word of the Christ.

It is in this direction that we must look for and seek the manifested power of our ascended Lord. It is in this great realm that we must rise to meet Him. It is still true that " He cometh not with observation." His enthroned might is not manifested by the creation of ingenious organisations, or by a great display of merely outward activities. His glory is not centred in the elaborate machinery

of social combinations, or in the blazoned banners of political ambitions. These things may have their value, and some of them may feel the touch of His power from afar. But the genuine manifestation of His power is in inward conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. His work is in the hearts and consciences of men, in the spiritual potencies that lead the soul into Divine truth and the life of holiness. In these days of pride in church organisations we must remember, if we wish to have a real vision of the working of our ascended Redeemer, that, " not by might, and not by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." The Lord, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received the promise of the Father, pours forth into the hearts of men the promised " power," the power of the Holy Ghost.

II. The ascended Christ makes His Messianic glory the central energy of heaven.

In Him heaven obtains its highest vision of the glory of God. The God of redemption has become the centre of the heavenly places. Love is the highest expression of God, and grace is the highest expression of love. The God that sitteth upon the throne has to be reinterpreted in the light of the " Lamb that was slain." Just as the Son of Man was the complete revelation of God upon the earth, so the ascended Christ is the complete revelation of God in heaven. The angels that looked upon

the face of God in cycles past, are learning anew the meaning of His glory, and ancient principalities and powers are learning from the enthroned Son the manifold wisdom of God. Once heaven rang with music to the Creator, and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But now the highest music of heaven is praise to the Redeemer God, the Hallelujah Chorus to the "Lamb that was slain." He has been exalted by the right hand of God to reveal the heart of God to the wondering hosts of heaven. For all heaven God is marvellously reinterpreted in the light of the atoning cross.

To their ascended Lord His saints look with hope and confidence in the hour of their "falling asleep." The vision of His exaltation has turned death into the portal of glory. They die "in the Lord," and this Lord is by the right hand of God exalted to the heavenly places, so that no power can pluck them out of His hand. The glory of the ascended Christ solves the old problem of the "intermediate state," as far as it needs to be solved for the hope and consolation of men. Speculative questions may remain, but the practical matter is full of light. The believer is one with His Lord, and at every stage must get nearer and nearer to the goal of His love and life. "I go to prepare a place for you" is the voice that comes down to him out of the excellent glory. As we face the life

beyond death, we are found "looking to Jesus," and that look is in the direction of heavenly glory. As the old hymn has it simply and sweetly:

> "But this I do find,
> We two are so joined,
> He'll not live in glory
> And leave me behind."

It is this vision of the ascended Lord that gives such immediateness and clearness to the hope of the Apostle Paul. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." For "to die" must mean a nearer approach to His heavenly glory. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "Willing rather to be away from home from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." Sufficient for the perfect triumph of the spirit in death was the vision of the martyr Stephen: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Being by the right hand of God exalted, He beckons His people into everlasting light.

The ascended Lord is the centre and source of heaven's amazing hope. Christ is exalted for His great work, in which things in heaven and things in earth are to be reconciled. He gives a forward look of hope, not only to the earth, but also to heaven. His present heavenly reign is the promise and potency of vaster glories yet to come for heaven and earth. He is to shake, not the earth only, but

also heaven, and He is to shake both alike into a more glorious shape and condition. "But He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet." The saints in His presence cannot "be made perfect" without us, and we all have our hope alike in the power of His redemptive glory. His work is not yet complete, and He cannot be fully revealed even to those who are nearest His seat. But they know that the glory He has already manifested is the sure earnest of His complete manifestation. "When Christ who is our life shall appear," then shall all His saints appear with Him in glory. The great goal is still drawing heaven itself onward in blessed expectancy. "For we know that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

III. The ascended Lord gives clear evidence of His Messianic power upon the earth.

"He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear," said Peter. Those who have eyes may still see the pouring forth of His Divine power, and those who have ears may still hear it.

His power is evident in the continued spiritual existence of His Church. The more this persistence of the spiritual *dunamis*, this inward spiritual energy, of the Church of the centuries is considered, the more marvellous does it appear. Seen aright,

it is a greater thing than the startling phenomena of Pentecost. It is far easier to kindle meteors for a night than to light up the heavens and roll its quiet systems along for centuries. The voice of the scorner comes as usual to clarify the evidence and make it stronger, albeit not willingly. That voice reminds us that this Church has often ebbed into shallows of doctrine and life, that it has ofttimes fallen far short of its ideals, and has sometimes over wide areas been shamefully contaminated by the spirit of the world. The voice will also remind us that even to-day the Church itself is deploring its own lack of spiritual life and power. We will not seek extenuation of the charges or mitigation of sentence. We only reply that these grave facts make all the more significant the Divine miracle of the spiritual persistence of the Church. The frequent impact of the world upon it reveals the awful power of that world-spirit which is seeking steadfastly to destroy it. Yet its spiritual standards have not been captured. Wounded it has been in many a conflict, but never finally defeated. It is a manifest persistent Divine energy in a world of evil. Even the Church's lament over its own unspirituality to-day is evidence of its heart of invincible spirituality. The "gates of Hades" have not prevailed against it. The ascended Lord hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

His power is evident in the persistent conviction

of sin which He forces upon the world. This is a fundamental act and work of the Holy Spirit whom He has sent. The world cannot get away from the awful conviction of sin in its severance from the life of the Son of God. If we compare the sin-consciousness of the centuries since Christ with that which existed before His coming, and before He sent forth the Holy Spirit's power from His Messianic exaltation, the result will be startling. It was a comparatively small thing in the great pre-Christian heathen world for a man to walk after his own lusts and the desires of his own heart. Save under the shadow of Sinai, sin was no cosmic horror. But we see that the ascended Christ has poured out that power of the Holy Spirit which convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is true that there are those to-day who seek to make light of sin. The tendency to deny the awful essence of sin is common to certain pretentious types of speculation and to the lustful spirit of the world. Nor do we deny the power of this combination in its attack upon the sin-consciousness which Jesus has given to His Church. But the failure of the attack is apparent to all who seriously feel the pulse of the people. Much as the world would love to have sin resolved into an immaterial trifle, and subtle as the forces are which would satisfy this lust of the world, it is clear that there is here a Divine power which will not permit the disaster,

and is perpetually convincing the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. The ascended Lord has clearly poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

The Holy Spirit of truth is clearly guarding the deposit of the sacred word of the Master. As the Paraclete was sent by the ascended Christ upon His disciples to conserve and interpret His message, so that same power is holding the message marvellously inviolate against the most determined and subtle attacks. From within as well as without the Church persistent attempts are being made to destroy the historical foundations of our holy faith, with the object, on the one side, of reducing it to a purely human basis, and, on the other, of dissolving it into a mythological dream. Shouts of triumph have been prematurely raised at the supposed dissolution of the old faith. Yet those who have eyes to see can discern the steady and sure persistence of the holy message of the cross. Something deeper than the speculations of scepticism gives calm power to the sacred Word. "When the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall be a witness of Me." The words of the ascended Lord abide for ever.

The power of the ascended Lord appears in the deepening sense of human responsibility and

destiny. The Holy Spirit convinces of " righteousness and of judgment." Again we admit the power of the contrary forces. The spirit of the world is striving to turn human life into the shallows of materialism and pleasure-seeking. There is a broad and subtle sneer turned upon the message of the heavenly life. People would cast away from them " the cords " of the eternal. Yet deeper than all this we can see the human spirit looking into the eternal of man's destiny with large and serious eyes, and it is clear that this vision is here to stay. It is the power of our ascended Lord.

Yet, deeper than all, each man may have the witness in Himself. The holy power which shall make conviction certain is within the reach of all. " He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Then, like Stephen, we shall see Him standing on the right hand of God, the eternal King of the destinies of men.

X

THE FREE GIFT OF GOD

For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Romans vi. 23.

THE New Testament doctrine of grace obviously depends upon its doctrine of sin. With regard to controversies respecting the origin of sin, it has been pithily said that our business is not to discover how sin came into the world, but rather how to drive it out of the world. This working maxim we may accept, yet it is also clear that, if we are to expel sin from the world, we must not essentially mistake its nature. In the gospel of Jesus Christ the way of overcoming and destroying sin is revealed, but this way is valid and necessary only if the teaching of Jesus and His apostles concerning the nature of sin is essentially true. If sin is something other than it is conceived in the message of the cross, then the declared work of Jesus is the most stupendous mistake in the whole course of man's moral and spiritual history.

In the departure of the present times from the evangel of the cross, we find that the denial of the great message of atoning grace is partly produced

by, and partly creative of, a fundamentally different conception of sin. The old conception of sin needs the old gospel. A new theology needs a new conception of sin. For the great human problem to be solved is the problem of sin, and the conception of the solution must depend upon the conception of the nature of the problem. Those who teach a more superficial method of human redemption naturally give a more superficial meaning to sin. The gospel of the Son of God teaches that human sin is the essential and complete failure and disaster of the human spirit, so that nothing less than the Divine intervention in a specific work of redemption could save men from ruin. Those who would claim for man himself an inherent self-redemptive power must invest sin with a character of comparative innocency.

We are all by this time familiar with the evolution-gospel in which the entrance of so-called sin into the world is explained as being, not a calamity, but a benediction. If it is to be called a "fall" at all, then it must be humorously labelled a "fall upwards." Upon the hypothesis of an evolution-redemption of humanity, such a conception of sin was inevitable. The evolution which is to carry man upward into his perfect life must not be convicted of having made any fundamental mistake. If it allowed moral disaster to fall upon man, then all confidence in it is at an end, and the new

theologian would have to fall back upon some other redemptive power. And what other could he fall back upon, save the redemption which is offered to men in the atoning God ? Hence sin becomes to him only the " necessary shadow of the good," the " necessary condition of moral consciousness," and any other term which will describe it as a benediction from heaven upon the moral development of man. It is strange how a pretentious theory can blind a man to the most obvious facts of everyday life !

The " natural divinity " theology may perhaps be regarded as the " evolution-gospel " theology looked at from a slightly different angle. At any rate, they do not necessarily clash with one another. We are now familiar with the terms of the " natural divinity " advocates also. In their view man is incapable of essential wrong-doing, for his nature is essentially divine. They admit that the finite part of man can fall into errors of judgment, but they hold that the being who thus errs is essentially good, and is dominated by a holy purpose and aim even when his errors are greatest. The real man at the back of it all is a divinity, a vital soul of holiness. Sin is but an accident, and does not touch the essence of human life. How little, then, can it be a cosmic disaster ? And how little can it need the intervention of Divine self-sacrifice to avert the ruin ? Of course a man may lie and

thieve and murder and wallow in unmentionable wickedness; but the thing is not fundamentally serious. It is only a holy divinity falling into an error of judgment. This abominable wretch is really a "divinity" seeking union with God, but by some unexplained accident has missed his way!

To pass from these follies to the gospel of Christ is like passing from the tumult of madness to the reasoned words of sanity. Here the terrible facts of human sin are soberly and profoundly recognised, and a gospel of redemption commensurate with the infinite mischief is offered to all who will receive it. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I. Sin is fundamentally fatal. "The wages of sin is death."

The term "wages" is here introduced in order to bring in the contrast of the next clause. As sin pays its servants the earned meed of death, so God gives men in Jesus Christ the free and unearned gift of eternal life. In the twenty-first verse the form of statement is different: "For the end of those things is death." The meaning clearly is, that sin is radical disaster. It is not a superficial and temporary disease of humanity. It inflicts death upon man's essential life. It is fundamentally fatal.

In man's deepest consciousness of sin, it is known to be essential antagonism to God. The Son

of Man did not know it in Himself, but He knew it clearly and fully in others, and He declared its nature to be satanic, the essence of diabolical opposition to God and truth. He saw man as a sinner under the rule of the prince of this world, the vital centre of the power of darkness, the hateful opponent of the kingdom and power of God. What can those who theoretically trifle with sin think of such tremendous words as these: "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do"? The Saviour saw in human sin the work of that strange and terrible power in the universe which menaces the very throne of truth and the government of God. Human sin is "the works of the devil." It must be destroyed by the Son of God. Either the sin or the sinner must perish.

The holiest and purest moral consciousness of mankind has pre-eminently recognised sin as essential antagonism to God. This has been so abundantly manifested and proved in the lives of the saints that the moral consciousness which minimises the reach and significance of sin may be justly regarded as inferior or defective. Not only has it been the case that the holiest men have seen sin to be most exceeding sinful, but they have also realised most intensely its fundamental reference to God. Every other reference has dwindled compared with its terrible opposition to the heart of

God, its assault upon eternal truth and love. It is in the consciousness of the cosmic wrong of sin that they have been overwhelmed with the sorrow of penitence. It is in the satanic violence which it does to the God of truth and grace that their eyes have found their fountain of penitential tears. How petty compared with this great consciousness is the flippant assertion of some moderns that the only reference of sin that we need to consider is the wrong which we may chance to do to our fellow-men. They tell us that we need not trouble about the transcendental reference of sin to God. We are told to regard the relations of sin just as we are bidden to regard all other relations of life, as an earth-business. This is boastingly described as the practical way of looking at sin. But surely the truly practical way is to regard sin in the very centre of its mischief, and not in the earthly fringe of it. Man cannot set himself right with man until he has set himself right with God. Strictly speaking, it is against God, and God only, that sin is directed. Man may wrong his fellow-man, but it is in its opposition to the life of God that the act becomes sin. Hence the truly profound and awful consciousness of the penitential cry: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

Sin is continuously destructive of moral fibre. Sin can be seen eating away the moral substance

and fibre of life as clearly as a ravaging disease can be seen eating away the tissue and strength of the physical constitution. In the light of this fact, the philosophy of sin as a "fall upwards," and the representation of it as a blundering effort to find God, are alike convicted of foolishness and of a refusal to look the grave facts of life honestly in the face. If sin were essentially a seeking for God, the unsatisfied effort of the divinity in man, then, no matter how blundering the effort might be, it would inevitably bring the life nearer to God and gradually evolve light out of the darkness. The life of sin must thus gradually and inevitably lead to the life of holiness. But the awful realities of sin laugh such a theory to scorn. The actual leading of sin is not towards God, but away from God. Sin is revealed, not as the blundering energy of life, but as the destructive encroachment of death. Whatever measure of the divine may remain in man, sin is not its servant, but its destroyer. Any specific illustration of this is superfluous. The worst human reprobates have grown out of the comparatively innocent child, through the destructive energy of sin in themselves and in others who have influenced them for evil.

The end of such a process is evident: "The end of those things is death." It is impossible to expound in its fullness the meaning of this "death." The possible references and relations of this terrible

word to man's future existence have raised many controversies. Over some of these relations a dark cloud hangs, and eschatology gleams darkly from behind the veiling of God. Yet we can see and know enough to make sin appear exceedingly terrible. For this " death " compared with physical death is as the soul compared with the body. It is death preying on man's deepest nature, on his eternal being. Physical death may be overcome by moral power; but the awful thing that eats away man's moral life—that is the second death, the ultimate disaster.

The use of the term " wages " arises from Paul's vivid consciousness of the satanic personality as the central energy of sin. The world of sin is organised in and around the " prince of darkness," " spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places." It is the mysterious kingdom of evil that has set itself up in opposition to the kingdom of God. It deludes men into its service; and pays them their wages in death. It is, in truth, the kingdom of death, the spiritual antagonist of the Divine kingdom of life. Woe unto those who remain in its service, for it has nothing but death to give them for all their labour and toil. The wages of sin is death.

II. God overcomes the fatal power of sin by the free gift of eternal life.

Since sin reigns in man, and sin is the power of

death, the God of redemption comes to man with the free gift of corresponding life. This cannot come as wages or as reward, for it is the first step in the overcoming of sin, and this step must be taken by the grace of God. The heart of man has been corrupted by sin, so that there is no help from the inside. Corruption cannot work itself out into incorruption, and thus claim the reward of life. Sin and death had taken the citadel of human life, and could only be driven out by the incoming of life through the power and grace of the redeeming God. This does not mean that every or any human life is completely evil. It is clear as a fact of experience that the natural man may possess many very lovable qualities. In every life, save the most depraved, there is a manifest conflict between good and evil elements in a man's nature. Many noble things have been done by men and women whose natural life had not yet surrendered itself to the spiritual life of God's free gift to men. The message of the grace of God makes appeal to that element in man which has not been completely destroyed by sin. Yet this fact does not alter the dread significance of the other fact we have already considered, that sin has got at the seat of power in the natural man, and is working out its ravages, little by little overcoming the natural tendencies towards good. Man can be saved from himself only by accepting the gift of all-conquering spiritual

life from God. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. God's free gift of life must destroy the power of sin and death. Without this gift of grace, even the noblest warrior must cry, " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? "

Redemption is a vital incoming of new spiritual life into the human spirit. Eternal life is a positive power by which the man is re-created. Unfortunately, theology has sometimes represented the free gift of eternal life as being merely the negation of death, the proclamation above the soul of absolution from transgression and escape from death. The atonement has thus become a legal covenant by which charters have been granted to those that believe, and an arrangement of grace whereby the faithful may escape from hell and enter into glory. In fine, eternal life has been regarded as something stored away for us in the heavens, rather than as the present power by which sin is conquered, and by which we are changed into the power of a victorious spiritual life. No doubt the reference of the glorious words, " eternal life," passes onwards into unknown meanings and developments of glory in the everlasting prospect of the saints of God ; but those unimaginable glories depend upon the vital meaning which eternal life has for us here and now. Life is not an arrangement, but a power. The life eternal is not something to be received in

another world, but the spiritual might which is to conquer our sin at the present time. For the spiritual and the eternal are one. The life which is given in the atonement of the Son of God is the entrance of the life of the God of redemption to take supreme command of our being. "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

God's gift of life is the beginning of new power, and therefore a call to noblest effort. While men imagine that the free gift of life is something outside of them written only in the books of heaven, they may logically sing, as many have sung in effect:

"Nought remains for me to do. Hallelujah!"

But when we realise that what God gives is not absolution, but life, or rather that He will not give absolution apart from life, then we understand that the new life is a call to new labour, and that we must be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Although eternal life can only come as God's free gift, yet, having come, it introduces a test of service in which the prospect of a final reward is not absent. The life itself cannot be other than a free gift, but the working out

of that life into its final form of glory depends in no small measure upon our faithfulness. The warning comes to the negligent disciple, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Happy the man who can say at last, "I laboured more abundantly than they all. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

III. God's free gift of eternal life is given only in Jesus Christ. "In Christ Jesus our Lord."

In Jesus Christ human sin has been met and conquered. Something of the secret of this great work of redemption we have seen in the earlier discourses of this series. As Son of God He attacked and destroyed the dominion of the devil over humanity. As Son of Man He entered vitally into the life of our race, and overcame the curse of sin by which we were overwhelmed. He condemned sin "in the flesh." Sin had to be conquered on its own ground, and in its own citadel. The Son of Man broke the curse for humanity, in virtue of His vital union with our race. The deliverance could not be effected by man himself, for sin had thralled him. It could not be effected by the natural evolution of life, for man had broken away from this into the mysterious transgression of his own self-will. But what these things could not do, "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the ordinance of the law might

be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

This redeeming Christ, who has broken the curse of sin in and for humanity, becomes by this redemptive process the new power of eternal life in the spirit of the believer. God could not give the free gift of life to men save by some divine energy of power and grace whereby the curse of sin should be overcome. The power by which the curse was annulled must henceforth become the new power of life by which holiness should be established. The atoning Christ becomes the indwelling Christ. The Christ who descended into death becomes evermore the Spirit of life. The new man in Christ lives, because Christ lives in him. "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

If this gospel be true, there can be no way of return to God for man except in and through Jesus Christ. His redemptive work is universal in its efficacy, and there is no other known power that can break and conquer the power of human sin. Other teachers and prophets there have been, but He is the only Saviour of men. There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved. God was in Christ, reconciling a world unto Himself. He is the way, the truth, and

the life for all men in all generations. No man can find his way to the Father save through the Son. There can be no supplement to this gospel. The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is not for us to set boundaries to the conditions under which the redeeming and renewing Christ enters into the lives of men. We do not limit the spiritual might of Him who is Son of God and Son of Man. It is true that we are commanded to preach the full message of His grace to all men and all nations. The great apostle asks, "How can they believe, unless they hear?" We know that where the word of His grace is proclaimed a voice from heaven cries, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Yet not within the direct shining of this light do we limit the redemptive power of the eternal Christ, or the effectual working of Him who was lifted up to draw all men unto Him. Those who see not the full light of the Sun of Righteousness may perchance rejoice in the light of His star in the east, and start on the soul's pilgrimage to worship the Child Jesus. Many shall come from the north and the south and the east and the west, to whom the life of humanity's Saviour had been given, and shall shame many who knew the full glory of His kingdom. But no one can find life outside of Christ. Among all the great multitude

which no man can number, clad in white robes and with palms in their hands, there can never be a single soul that has not washed its robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

We cannot get beyond the life of Christ in all the unfoldings of our future glory. As He is the Alpha, so is He also the Omega, of our life. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. All that eternal life can ultimately mean lies in the potency of the Christ within us. It is by His Spirit within us that we shall be changed from glory to glory. We are complete in Him. For ever and for ever our eternal glory will be the manifested life of the Christ within us. We shall be satisfied, when we awake, with His likeness.

XI

SALVATION BY FAITH

But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His Name.—JOHN XX. 31.

THE message of salvation by faith is the complement of the message of eternal life as the free gift of God. It is both exclusive and inclusive. It excludes the conception of salvation by the merit of works, but it includes in the inception and process of salvation the active response and participation of the human spirit. Although man cannot earn his salvation by his own moral prowess, yet salvation cannot come to him as a purely passive recipient. As the salvation of the soul is an essentially moral business, it demands the presence of answering and co-operating moral activity in the life of the saved. The gift is a gift of life, and must therefore be appropriated by processes of life in the individual recipient. "By grace are ye saved, *through faith*, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Since salvation is wholly through faith, apart from all merit of works, it must clearly be the free gift of God. On

the other hand, God can only give the gift of life when it is vitally accepted and appropriated.

Yet this great doctrine of salvation by faith, or as it is best known in the history and theology of the Church, justification by faith, has been a rock of offence to many from the very beginning of the Christian message. The insistency with which Paul urged and demonstrated it shows how strongly it was opposed by a certain type of mind. To the legalist and the ethicist it seems to undermine the very foundations of morality, and to overthrow ethical judgment and justice. Various positions are suggested, in order to reduce this evangelical message to a kind of logical or moral absurdity. With a compassionate smile for our fatuity, the ethical reasoner puts such a case as this: An immoral reprobate, fearing neither God nor men, lives a long life of wickedness, and is at last summoned to face the dread hour of death. In the last extremity, when his opportunities of achieving further iniquity are past, he believes in Jesus Christ, and is straightway admitted into the home of everlasting blessedness, his life of sin all cancelled as if it had never been. Is that in accordance with moral law or moral equity? Can a reasonable man accept such a position, or approve it?

The answer to that question will appear as we proceed with our exposition of the way of salvation by faith. For it will be found, as we understand the

meaning of this great truth, that there is no other way of salvation possible to men, and that this way of salvation is not only in accordance with the highest moral laws, but also in the highest degree expresses the demand and power of those laws. Its justification lies precisely in this, that it completely satisfies the moral demand, and that this demand is not satisfied in any other way.

John's term in the text gets to the root of justification and salvation. In the act of faith, man receives "life." We admit that theological expositions have sometimes been misleading, and popular statements of salvation through faith have sometimes misled still more seriously. We admit that the moral element which is the essence of human salvation has often been kept in the background, while the gracious arrangement by which man is absolved and rescued from hell has been made to stand in conspicuous isolation. But no one can rightly lay this charge against the writings of the New Testament. "Justification" does certainly include a judgment of acquittal from condemnation for sin; but it also includes a positive moral work within the life of the believer. He is not only "accounted righteous," but he is also actually "made righteous," a twofold meaning which makes the content of the original word. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a "new creation." Salvation, or rather being saved, does certainly

include escape from the dark consequences of sin and its awful judgment; but it includes also the moral renewal and the moral progress of the life, so that salvation in its full sense is not obtained until the man appears before the glory of God without moral spot or blemish. Our salvation is an energy of holiness to be "worked out with fear and trembling." Still, as we make progress in the power of holiness, our salvation grows "nearer than when we believed." All this is contained in John's pregnant word: "And that believing ye may have life in His name."

I. Man cannot be redeemed and perfected morally without attachment to moral and spiritual forces.

It is clear that a true morality must begin in the recognition of eternal law. If man is to rise to a morality that is worth having, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, he must recognise it as a law written in the heavens. Attempts have been made to constitute man the servant of a narrower code, and great claims have been made for the sanctions of moral precepts having no deeper or wider foundation than man's pleasure or utility in the present life. The "record of man's experiences of pleasure and pain" through many generations has been deemed sufficient ground for his highest moral ideals and judgments. Men construct their ethics out of the dust, and expect humanity to bow the

knee to the dust-made idol. But God has set eternity in the heart of man. No great morality is possible for man until he knows the moral law as a boundless and eternal imperative for his conscience; until the moral law has for him, as it had for Kant, the majesty of the starry heavens. The recognition of eternal law is the beginning of morality.

The next step is inevitable. There can be no complete morality except in the power of the inspiration derived from the unseen and eternal. Even if a satisfactory moral code could be constructed out of the materials of our temporal life, the inspiration needed for perfect obedience would still be lacking. A convention of temporal interest and pleasure, even if it had the sanction of evolutional experience, could never supply men with the ardent enthusiasm required for consecrated obedience to the precepts of the moral law. That which is constructed out of pleasure or interest would readily give way before the demands of the pleasure or interest of the hour. The law could never be absolute, and the obligation of fulfilment could never rise into a flame of devotion. For ardent devotion to moral law, man must have inspiration from the eternities. The motto: "Do right, though the heavens fall," could only have been written in the light of eternal meanings. When man can say to the eternal Power, "I have seen an end of all per-

fection, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad," then that commandment becomes the breath of his life. Man can rise to great moral heights only when he knows himself a child of eternity, and recognises the voice of the moral law as the voice from the eternal places, before which all the fleeting interests of life are but as fading flowers. Then moral truth becomes his unquestioned Lord, and he heeds no light save that from the heavenly places:

> "His not to make reply,
> His not to reason why,
> His but to do and die."

The next step is not less certain. There can be no complete morality except by the spiritual aid of a higher Power. I am not certain whether there are any who deny this affirmation. I can scarcely think so. But if there are, their denial is of little account in the long testimony of the most earnest and the greatest moral heroes in the history of our race. The higher men have placed their moral ideals, the more they have felt the need of Divine aid. The great moral conflict of the human spirit has proved to men that they must cry out for help to a holy Power that is greater than they. Only in linking themselves with the eternal Spirit could they get the mastery over the sin which they discovered within themselves. "Even the youths shall faint and grow weary, and the young men

shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Man must fail in the moral battlefield, unless "the eternal God is his refuge, and beneath him are the everlasting arms."

II. Faith is the active reception of these necessary spiritual and eternal forces into a man's life.

Faith is the vital recognition of the unseen and eternal. Jesus Christ is the revelation of the unseen world, the Lord of the heavenly places, and faith in His name is the vital acceptance of this revelation and this Lordship. In the epistle to the Hebrews faith is defined as "the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things unseen." In this definition the world of the merely present and temporal disappears, and faith is revealed with its gaze upon the movement of eternal forces. It is the vital energy of faith that is described in the words of Paul: "While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal." In faith in Jesus Christ, therefore, a man is uplifted out of the lower perspective of time, and vitally knows that his life is determined for him, not by the pleasures and interests of this earthly life, but by the authority of eternal truth. He feels and accepts the government of the unseen and eternal. Thus faith in Christ fulfils the first essential demand of moral power.

Faith in Christ is the inspirational acceptance of life eternal as the secret of holiness. The keynote of the vital inspiration of Christian faith is found in such utterances as these: "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." The eternal glory of the Divine Christ is the source of moral inspiration for the children of faith. The glories of the heavens are calling upon them to perform the demands of holiness upon the earth. Earthly duties are made light by heavenly hopes and inspirations. Earthly burdens are made easy by the shining of the heavenly glory. The inspiration is ever greater than the task, and adds the music of joy to every fulfilment. The work can never fail for inadequacy of inspiration. "Every one that hath this hope upon Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." So boundless is the heavenly inspiration that the holy challenge of faith has no limit. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

For Thy sake we are killed all the day long;

We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am

persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Thus faith fulfils the second essential demand of moral power.

Faith is the surrender of the spirit to the eternal Life and the eternal Power. This is why it is declared that everything is possible to faith, because it links the human spirit with omnipotence. It is the true losing of self in the eternal Spirit, of which sages have dreamed. But it is far from being a dissolution or dissipation of personality in the Infinite. On the contrary, it is the highest assertion of personality, the assertion of a power to lie on the breast of the Infinite, and yet to live all the more intensely the life of the earth. To the man of faith the voice comes from the eternal throne, "Abide in Me, and I in you; for apart from Me ye can do nothing." And in the power of the unseen presence faith replies, "I can of mine own self do nothing: I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Here power to attain moral perfection is complete. Thus faith fulfils the last great demand of moral life.

III. This potency of faith reveals itself as faith in a personal God.

The speculations of men run ever into abstrac-

tions, but the vital demands of human life move ever towards concrete realities. The psychologist converts the material world into "ideas," but the multitudes of men in their daily life must come to grips with the concrete. They go to the wheat-field for food to appease their hunger and to furnish sustenance for their bodies. They go to the spring for water to quench their thirst. They look to the sun for light and warmth and pleasantness; and to the starry sky for majesty and beauty. Not less must the spirit of man come to grips with reality of its own kind. The philosopher will etherealise the ultimate energy of being into terms of abstraction. He will speak of forces and laws and processes and ultimate energy and universal being. And, if he is of a religious turn of mind, he will counsel man's viewing of things in their universal aspect, and man's living in accordance with the laws of universal being. But the spirit of man is still hungry, as hungry as a man's body is after being regaled with psychological "ideas." The spirit of man is intensely personal, and must link itself with personality. Abstractions are of little value for the soul that is hungry for spiritual and eternal life. The spirit of man finds no satisfaction until it has passed beyond the region of mere laws and principles of holiness, and has got into living touch with the God of holiness. It must find the eternal Personality of good, or be for ever orphaned.

Jesus knew that no belief in a power or principle could take His personal place with His disciples. Hence He said, "I will not leave you orphaned: I will come to you." The intensely concrete personality of man will always cry, "O God, Thou art my God. Early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." The world is but a dry and thirsty land until the human spirit finds the personal God of truth and love.

Only from the personal God can man derive adequate inspiration and power for the victory of life. We may talk largely about ideals and principles, and about their power to help us to live, but their power chiefly lies in their relation to the Divine personality we feel behind them. I do not say that men have not been greatly inspired and impelled by ideals without a clear consciousness of their relation to God, or of the being of God at all. Good ideals and principles, discharged as they are from the throne of God, have a momentum of their own. But they cannot permanently sustain and inspire unless they are reconnected with the personal God from whom they come. All movements divorced from faith in the personal God have come to naught. Finite personality must lean upon the infinite Personality. Finite love must be kindled and sustained by the infinite Love. Finite holiness must be created and developed by the infinite

Holiness. The principle of love must be continually rekindled in the love of God. Hence the inspirations of the evangel of Christ are all personal. The Son of Man is the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very impress of His person. And it is in this concrete Divine personality that all inspiration and fullness lie. "We love, because He first loved us." Hence Jesus said, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words. And My Father will love him. And We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." Words of light are these from Him whose own felicity was in the bosom of the Father, and who said, "I am not alone: for the Father is with Me."

IV. Faith in God reveals itself as faith in His redeeming Son. "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."

Our meditations have been inevitably leading us to this conclusion, which is the specific message of the New Testament. The forces of faith flow in a determined stream. Faith must lay hold of the unseen and eternal for moral ends. It must find as its object, not mere principles, but a holy Personality. This holy Personality is revealed in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Hence true faith in God becomes faith in the Son of God, the revelation of the Father to men. Therefore, those who believe in the Son of God have eternal life. They have

penetrated to the ultimate secret of power. They have found all truth and all holiness in the glory of divine Personality. They have found in the Divine heart that loved and loves them the highest inspiration for self-sacrifice, and for the great battle against sin and selfishness. And they have found in fellowship and union with their Lord the complete power for winning the victory in the moral conflict of the spirit.

It is not surprising that it is around Jesus the greatest enthusiasms have been created. Galilean fishermen became heroes through faith in His name. Men, women, and children have laughed at torture and death for His name's sake. Tribulation in His cause has been welcomed as honour and glory. Watchwords of various kinds have come and gone, but the name of Jesus remains an undiminished inspiration and power. Men have seen in Him in embodied form all the noblest ideals which have ever ennobled human life, and have found those ideals bathed in such a fount of personal love and grace that they could no more faint for ever while they looked upon the brightness of His face. All man's ultimate needs are fulfilled in Him. Faith in Him is the highest and divinest power to which human life can be lifted. In Him man enters into, and abides in, fellowship with God. This is the true God, and eternal life.

The sceptical question which entered into the

introduction to this discourse has already been answered. It arose from a misconception of the meaning of faith. If faith were but a formal acceptance of the doctrines of the gospel and of the claims of Jesus, then such a death-bed cancellation as we supposed could have no serious meaning, nor could such an arrangement avail an unchanged moral life as it passed into eternity. But we have seen that true faith is a vital process in the spirit, an entrance into eternal life, a consecrated self-surrender to the life and love of God. Where the law of life truly enters, whether at the eleventh hour or any other, it conquers the law of death. In the act of faith, man becomes a " new creature. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." As to what such a man has lost by the previous record of his life, and as to what that record will mean to his character when he passes into the unseen world, all that must be left to the judgment seat of God. But nothing can alter the fundamental and glorious truth that he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. For He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and has concluded all under sin that He may have mercy upon all, even to the eleventh hour. These things I proclaim, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.

XII

THE INDWELLING CHRIST

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me.—John xv. 4.

A VERY significant feature of modern times is, that the affirmation of the Divine forces in the life of redemption is often lightly dismissed as obsolete mysticism. Why mysticism should be obsolete does not well appear, unless it is in the sense that the light of the sun is obsolete to a blind man. The literal meaning of the word simply calls attention to the occult forces that operate in the life of man, and the history of the mystic is simply the history of men who have sought to bring their spiritual nature into the closest possible contact with the life of God. That there are perils in a purely subjective mysticism is evident enough, for those who aim at the highest should see that they are clearly directed, and not caught up into a nebulous world of dreams in uncontrolled personal subjectivity. Here as elsewhere the Scriptures supply the needed balance and the requisite direction, without in any degree diminishing the depth

of the spirit's experience of the life and love and fullness of God. The apostle John's writings reveal him as one of the clearest-eyed of the mystics of this type, but, in truth, this holy mysticism is of the very essence of the Christian faith, and belongs to every true believer in the Lord Jesus. To each of His disciples Jesus says, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will manifest Myself unto Him." "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me."

Yet the anti-mystic attitude of which I have spoken is an indication of the temper and the quality of the times. It reveals a lack of power to realise the deep things of life, to recognise the powers of the world to come. It is the sneer of those whose view is bounded by a very superficial world, and who think it well to proclaim the final triumph of Positivism, or Pragmatism, or Humanism, or any other term which will indicate the exclusion of "the light that never was on sea or land," the mystic forces of the human spirit. There are signs that men are getting weary of this miserable little universe of the anti-mystics. Even science is beginning to give them the cold shoulder, and to knock at the gates of spiritual mystery and force. They who are spelling out the secret of God are the children of wisdom, and wisdom shall yet

be justified of her children, when folly is ashamed and dumb. The scorner of spiritual and eternal energy in the lives of men has but a short day.

There are signs that science and philosophy are being driven into mysticism. They penetrate deeper only to find something deeper still. They are discovering that "there is a deep below the deep, and a height beyond the height." They are beginning to make known that "our hearing is not hearing, and our seeing is not sight." Mysterious energies are demanding recognition beyond the supposed solid boundaries of the material world of the Positivist and the practical Materialist. Occult forces are being recognised in the mind and the spirit of man. The things that eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard are coming to their own. In fine, life is being discovered to be a thing, not of Positivism, but of Mysticism, a vast network of operative spiritual forces.

> "And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see:
> But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?"

But, far in advance of the scientist and the philosopher, the Christian believer has known of a truth the indwelling power of God. To him it is an everyday experience, this life of the Son of God within him. It is in this power he has conquered himself. It is in this power he will finally overcome

the world. But he reaches not to the throne of God in his own strength, or by his own spiritual prowess. He has found in Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and it is through Him and in Him he comes to the Father. He knows his union with the heart of God in the indwelling of the Divine Son. " Abide in Me, and I in you."

I. Our natural life is in complete analogy with this mystical conception of our spiritual life.

No one but the foolish atheist will deny that our natural life is sustained by the Divine indwelling. Beyond the organic machinery of our bodies is that mysterious thing called life by which this machinery is filled, controlled, and operated. A mysterious energy pervades the mechanism, which has been with equal mysteriousness fashioned and moulded for the intricate and complex purposes of this energy. Nor can the force by which this mysterious life-power is supplied be any other than the Divine energy by which all things have been created. Thought cannot rest until it has found the ultimate secret of the occult energy of life in God. Not only are we His offspring, but also " in Him we live and move and have our being." Even in a natural sense, " man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." " There is a spirit in man, and the breathing of the Almighty giveth him understanding."

Creation performs its manifold activities through the immanent energies of God. Even science to-day is giving up the idea of the creation as a mere machine, a self-winding clock with its powers generated within itself. Matter is dissolving before the investigations of thought, and revealing the Divine mystery and spiritual energy behind it. By the immanent power of God the heavens revolve, the earth puts on her beautiful garments, the seas roll to the shore, the mountains uptower in majesty. Not less is it by the same Divine indwelling that the natural life and activities of man are sustained, for the life of man is greater than the glory of the starry heavens. Every breathing of our lips, every movement of our bodily frame, every word we speak, every thought we think, is made possible by the immanent life of the eternal God. We abide, because He abides in us.

The natural laws of this Divine indwelling are revealed in the powers of our natural life. It is in as far as we are practical mystics, and live in accordance with these laws, that our natural life is sustained in happiness and vigour. We have to set ourselves in harmony with the mysterious force which we cannot analyse, but must always endeavour to conciliate. For the true mystic cannot be merely passive to the Divine power. He must respond appropriately to the Divine call and the Divine law of life. He must actively seek to be

reconciled with God. In a similar way he who would find fullness and power in his natural life must respond to the laws by which he harmonises himself with the secret power of his being. The force of the stars is determined by the Divine power alone. Inanimate nature is impelled without consent or refusal along the harmonious paths of the Divine Spirit. But man has received a life which must voluntarily seek union and harmony with the life Divine. And this fact is as manifest in the laws of our natural life as in those of our spiritual life. We must "abide in Him," even as He "abides in us."

II. God dwells in each grade of life according to its own kind.

There are those who will recognise the Divine indwelling in the natural order of things, yet deny the spiritual indwelling which is central in the Christian faith and in the teaching of Jesus. In the conception of the course of nature they are willing to be mystics. They confess that God moves at the heart of the moving world, and that evolution is but another name for the onward march of God's purpose and power. They admit that in God we live and move and have our being. But they are bound to one kind of Divine immanence. They will not have any deviation from the so-called natural domain. God must accomplish all things by so-called natural processes, and natural evolu-

tion must exhaust the method of God's indwelling in the souls of men. A special redemptive indwelling through the atoning Christ they rule out as inadmissible. The mere statement of this negation suggests its unreasonableness and arbitrariness. A little examination of facts will show how foolish and futile it is.

God dwells in the life of man in different kind from His indwelling in the material world. It is the manifestation of the same Divine life we have in the shining of a star as in the power of thought, feeling, or will in man, but the life is clearly manifested in a higher kind and grade. As we follow the creation upward, we find indeed that the graduation of the manifestation of the Divine life is very marvellous, shading into a striking series of kinds, but the main stages are manifest to all observers. As we pass from inorganic to organic matter, from the mineral to the vegetable world, from the latter to the animal world, and from the brute creation to man, we move from point to point in which life varies in kind not less than in degree. It is as if they were inhabited by different energies, and had their being in a different source. Yet we know that it is the same Divine Spirit in the mysterious variety of His manifestations that determines the physical energy of the molecules in the atom, and the mental and moral energy of the spirit of man.

The leap in kind of Divine immanence in passing

from the inferior creation to man is such as nothing but knowledge and experience of it could make credible. In spite of all new conceptions of the evolution of created being, it is manifest that there is profound truth in the majestic statement : " And God created man in His own image, after His own likeness." However it came about, there is at present not only a gulf, but an abyss, between the spirit of man and the next thing that approaches him in the inferior creation. The highest thing an ape can think of climbing is a tree ; but the spirit of man ascends into the heavenly places. The horizon of the highest brute can be easily measured, but man's domain is illimitable. The difference between the two is the difference between the measurable and the immeasurable, between the boundaries of the earth and the endless vistas of heaven. " What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him ? Thou hast made him a little lower than Elohim, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." Consider the magnificences of man's inventions in science and art, consider the splendours of his mind in the literatures of the ages, consider the majesties of his realisation of the eternal demands of the moral law, consider the mighty movement of his religious spirit toward God. Then consider the energy of the beast of the forest and the field. What marvels of mysticism lie in this stupendous

variation in the manner and kind of the Divine immanence.

By what reason, then, can we exclude the teaching of the higher indwelling of God in the spiritual nature of those who set themselves in the right attitude and relation for such Divine indwelling? After the steady upreaching of the Divine immanence in specific kinds from the lowest atom to the natural life of man, who dares say to the Divine Spirit, "Thus far shalt Thou go, and no further"? Why should natural evolution be God's last word in the infinite possibilities of His indwelling power? The great movement has pointed the way rather to still deeper and more wonderful manifestations of His immanent life. Above the natural rises the spiritual, the highest manifestation of the manifold immanency of the Spirit of God.

The specific and special character of God's spiritual indwelling in the soul of man is made sufficiently manifest in the observed facts of human life. "All men have not faith," said the apostle Paul sadly. The same apostle strictly distinguishes between the spiritual man and the unspiritual, and points the indications of each kind. The same distinction is involved in our Saviour's words: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is a specific immanency of

God which gives being to the natural man. There is a specific and a higher immanence of God which gives being to the spiritual man. This must be received as a thing apart, by the self-surrender to the Spirit of God. They who have received the spiritual life know it to be a new and higher indwelling of God. They have passed from spiritual death into spiritual life, and this new life is attested by the re-creative indwelling of the Divine Spirit. This is the higher mysticism, the reasonable and grand consummation and crown of the mystic immanence of God in creation. The Son of God dwells in our hearts through faith.

III. The spiritual indwelling of God in human life must come by way of redemption.

The presence of the unspiritual man in the world is the sign of humanity's spiritual failure. It is not that the unspiritual world has not attained, but that it has fallen backward. The evidence of this fall is found in the positive quality and activity of unspirituality. In it is found the degradation of humanity, the source of its moral enormities and its social disorganisation. It is the positive curse of the race, the perversion of great and noble powers to evil and degrading ends. In all men there is the greatness of spiritual faculty and possibility, but the immanent Divinity which gives life and power to that faculty is absent in the unspiritual man. Yet, if there had been no failure

on the part of man, surely the spiritual as well as the natural part would have been filled with the Divine presence and glory. God would not willingly leave the noblest chambers of being unoccupied.

God returns to His spiritual immanence in the spirit of man. It is in this act of returning that the significance of the work of redemption lies. The stars continue in their courses for ever, and never fall away from the specific Divine immanence which gives them their concordant paths. The problem of redemption is the problem of a returning of the Divine indwelling which shall make man spiritually glorious. This is clearly a mightier work than the maintenance of the glory of the constant creation. Some special and mighty work and process are indicated, and this indication is satisfied in the gospel of redemption by the love and grace and truth of the Son of God. We have in these discourses endeavoured to show forth some of the meanings and glories of the achievement of human redemption in the self-humiliation and self-sacrifice and transcendent might of the Son of God. Yet all the while we know that we are but touching the surface of a boundless deep of Divine love and life. Our desire at the present point is just to point out that this transcendent work of redemption in Jesus Christ gloriously answers to the awful spiritual problem of human life. It is just the

stupendous thing that would avail to bring the eternal Spirit in the all-conquering immanency of spiritual life back into the desolated spiritual nature of man. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

The indwelling of the Son is also the indwelling of the Father and of the Spirit. Human redemption has been accomplished by the triune God through the Son. Through the Son men come to God. Through the Son God returns in spiritual indwelling into the lives of redeemed men. Through the Son the Father communes with men. Through the Son the Holy Spirit comes to men and dwells within them. As the Son enters into the lives He has won, all the power of God, Father, Son, and Spirit is manifested in the operations of the spiritual life. They who would receive the whole power of God into their lives must receive the Son. This is the Son's final word of redeeming power: "I am in My Father, and My Father in Me."

IV. God's spiritual indwelling in His Son is conditioned by the human response: "Abide in Me, and I in you."

As man's spiritual life was at first forfeited by the mysterious action of his moral free will, so it must be regained in the fullness of the same freedom. Grace and truth cannot come by compulsion. Spiritual life cannot be given by force. Man still retains the power to accept the great gift

which the Lord of love has won for him, and upon this power no coercion can be placed. The voice of the Saviour of men cries continually : " Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." But the dynamic with which the Redeemer comes to humanity is tremendous. Divine energies of love and grace and truth beyond the imagination of angels, and a persuasive Spirit of truth going forth clad with the panoply of this holy might to convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. Mighty is the power of the redemption in the Son, yet it appeals to the will, and asks the willing surrender of the spirit. " Abide in Me, and I in you."

The communion of the human spirit with the indwelling Son of God must be intimate, active, and constant. " Abide in Me. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Communion with God in Christ is the heart of vital Christian mysticism, and the central secret of power. In these days our attention is called outwards, and men boast that they do not spend their strength in introspection and religious contemplation as in days gone by. It is a modern boast that men do not unpractically spend their time in the " glory on the mount," but more practically and usefully in doing battle with the demons on the

plain. It is an idle boast, if it means forgetfulness of the silent sources of power. The kingdom of God is " within us." Outward service will dwindle, if inward energies are not renewed. We must know the secret of holy fellowship with the eternal Spirit. We must bind the inward powers of the soul into constant harmony with the indwelling Christ. We must eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, else we shall have no life for service. We must abide in Him, even as He abides in us. In the deepest fellowship of the soul with Him we shall receive life, and that abundantly.

From this will follow spiritual activity in and through the indwelling Christ. " As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me." Yet in the branch energy must be active to bear the fruit ordained and made possible by the power of the vine. The branch that bears no fruit shows that its union is not real, and is condemned. All holy communion with God must be manifested in activities of service for God and man. " Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be My disciples."

This is not obsolete. This is still the way of life and power for men. Those who depend upon merely natural forces will fail. For even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But God returns in His Son to give

us life by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Blessed are they who abide in the Son of God, and know that He abides in them. They have found the deep secret of love and life.

XIII

THE ELECTION OF GRACE

Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you; and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.—JOHN xv. 16.

BY the doctrine of the election of grace many are offended. It may almost be taken as an axiom that those parts of the message of the gospel which are difficult to the understanding, and which easily cause offence to the logic of the world, are among the richest revelations of Divine love and wisdom and truth. The Incarnation baffles the understanding, yet it is the beginning of God's richest self-revelation in grace and truth. The Atonement offends the wisdom of this world, yet to those who believe it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Many stumble at the message that man is justified freely in Christ apart from any personal merit or moral achievement. Yet, when this message is understood, it is seen to crown with highest glory the majesty of the moral law. In the gospel the kernel of a sacred difficulty is always the most nourishing fruit. The manna of the king-

dom is " hidden manna," and its treasure is " hid in a field." God's deepest wisdom offends the wise and the prudent, but reveals wonderful things to the spirit of the child of faith.

A passing sneer at Calvinism is supposed to be a sign of up-to-dateness. To speak of the election of grace is supposed to mark an obsolete pulpit. I am not concerned to defend anything that may be labelled Calvinism. I have not to expound Calvin, but Christ. My text-book is not Calvin's Institutes, but the inspired message of the New Testament. Calvin's conception of the doctrine of election was not infallible, but, in spite of any and all misconception, the gracious doctrine of election remains in the word of the Christ. In as far as the present times ignore this great teaching, they evince a superficial spirit. A sign of nobler feeling and thinking would be found in a reverent attempt to understand a great message which is clearly a breathing part of the living system of human redemption. This age will grow richer in Divine knowledge when it reverently recognises that God's truth is a great deep, and that it is only those who have patience to " go down into the deep " that can hope to see the more wonderful works of God. We must learn from the angels to " desire to look into " these things, and not spurn them as soon as they seem to confuse our limited logic.

For my authority in this discourse I have come

to the actual words of the Master. I am quite aware that many have found critical reasons which have led them to deny the authenticity of this gospel. There are others who have discovered critical reasons for discrediting all the reported utterances of Jesus in the gospels. And there are others whose critical condition has led them to still more fantastic conclusions. I am not called upon to acknowledge their critical fantasies, or to modify my assurance on their account. I am critically satisfied that we have in John's gospel, John himself being the authority, true and genuine records of the life and teachings of Jesus. I am confident in having for my text the direct authority of the Master Himself.

But, quite apart from the assurance of the genuineness and historicity of the record, our text is in vital harmony with all that is recorded in all the gospels of our Saviour's relation to His disciples. It would be scarcely possible to summarise more completely and pregnantly His call to them into His discipleship, His revelations of Himself to them from day to day, His communication to them of inspiration and life, and His final commission, than they are summarised in the Master's recorded words in our text. They are precisely what we might expect in the unveiling of the secret of His love to them, as He prepared them for His departure by giving them glimpses of His deeper and

permanent meanings in the kingdom of His grace. In the light of the records of Jesus, our text bears with it its own credentials.

Thousands have exulted in that consciousness which now came upon the disciples, and never afterwards left them, that they were the chosen vessels of Divine grace. In this consciousness the greatest spiritual heroes have been made. The loss of this consciousness would be a distinct spiritual loss. Let us therefore reverently inquire of the holy revelation what is the meaning of this message of Jesus, and endeavour to see, if false conception be sifted from true, whether we may not yet find some new joy and inspiration in the Master's words of love: "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you; and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

I. There have been conceptions of the election of grace which are manifestly false.

The election of grace is not an arbitrary *tour de force* of the Divine will. No doctrine of the kingdom or act of God can ever override the eternal principle involved in the ancient question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" To act arbitrarily is one of the impossible things of God. Even as it is impossible for God to lie, because He is absolute truth, even so it is impossible for Him to be arbitrary, because He is absolute reason. To think of the election of grace as an act of power

outside of all rationality, and especially outside of all moral reason, is to think of something that would contradict the very nature of God. Arbitrariness is a thought born of our own unreason and frequent blind self-assertion. In the Divine life it is unknown. Not a wild flower grows arbitrarily in the wilderness, not a wild-fowl is fledged arbitrarily among the crags. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father." There can be no act of God in time or eternity which is not the offspring of moral right and infinite reason. The old translators perplexed many by their translation of Paul's classic question in this form: "Hath not the potter *power* over the clay?" The picture conveyed to many readers was that of arbitrary and irresistible might moulding a helpless thing. But the apostle's real question is quite different. It is: "Hath not the potter a *right* over the clay?" Mere power may be arbitrary and unreasonable, but "right" is reason in its purity. The election of grace does not come from arbitrariness, but from the eternal "right" of a holy God.

The election of grace does not involve the exclusion of any one from the possibility of redemption in Christ. One cannot help wondering a little at the minute elaboration of the doctrine of the "election of exclusion" which one finds in the

theological discussions of the past. It is difficult to understand the operations of mind and conscience which made such conceptions possible. Yet the wise thinker will not be scornful, for it is possible enough that we have not grasped all that was in the mind of these learned and holy men. Yet we must definitely reject every conception which does not represent God as " not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The picture of " non-elect " infants consigned to hell, and of an irresistible grace, by which all might be compelled to come in, withheld from men who were to be allowed to perish, cannot be entertained in the light of the revelation of the Father's love in Jesus Christ. The argument that God has a " right " to save whom He will, and to reject whom He will ; that no one has a claim upon His grace, and that therefore no one has a right to complain at being left out, does not ring true to our consciences or to our vision of God. The only " right " that Love has, is just to be boundless love and grace. " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

> "None are excluded thence but those
> Who do themselves exclude."

The election of grace is not independent of the response of faith and holiness. The eternal pur-

pose is linked with moral energies in time. The writing in the book of life is duplicated in the spirit of the believer. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. His predestinations of yesterday are the moral forces of to-day. Those who have imagined that Divine election was an arrangement in the air, and not an energy creative of moral and spiritual force in human life, forgot the eternal and inexorable vitalities of God. Election does not link itself with a body of corruption, save to call it into life and service. Antinomianism is a direct contradiction of the living grace of the living God. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father." "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide."

II. There are suggested conceptions of the election of grace which cannot be accepted as adequate.

An ingenious and important suggestion is that which would lay the election of God upon Christ, as the representative of His redeemed ones, and not upon individual believers in their own persons. According to this view, Christ is the Chosen of the Father, and all believers are consequently chosen, without reference to their persons or their numbers, in virtue of being "in Christ." Since all believing men and women are potentially in the redemptive

purpose of God in Christ, they were in this sense included from eternity in God's election of Christ as the Redeemer of those that believe. This is as if one bought a field of hidden treasures. He might not tabulate all the treasures beforehand, but in buying the field that contained them all, he would actually buy every one of the treasures that might be found there, even to the smallest. So God chose a world of redemption "in Christ," and in doing so chose all who would believe in Him, whoever they might be. If I have understood Dr. Dale aright, in his fine work on the Epistle to the Ephesians, this is the conception which he advances in his own strong and strenuous way, basing it upon the words: "Even as He chose us *in Him* before the foundation of the world."

But this conception, although it contains important truth, cannot be made to satisfy all the New Testament teaching concerning the election of grace. The latter is constantly and consistently represented as the election of men and women into the kingdom of God. Their election "in Christ" is not merely potential, but specific and actual. They are called upon to "make their calling and election sure." We are not merely taught that the Father chose the Son, and all the possible world of redemption in Him, but that the Father and the Son have chosen the sons of the kingdom. The Saviour's words to His disciples: "Ye did not

choose Me, but I chose you," are representative words. They have an echo for the heart of every one who has heard His voice and obeyed. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring; and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd."

A slighter suggestion as an interpretation of the election of grace is that which would regard it as merely election to position or office in the kingdom of God. It is true that references to the election of grace in its fullness are often associated with the circumstances of election to office in the kingdom or the Church. This is the case when Jesus tells Paul that he is to be a "chosen vessel" for Him. But Paul deeply interpreted the official election as following upon a deeper election into spiritual life and power. "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, to reveal His Son in me." The Saviour's choice of the disciples included appointment to high office in the kingdom; but throughout the New Testament we find their recognition of a Divine choice which went down to the spiritual foundations of their life. He chose them "to bear fruit" with holy power. Nothing is clearer than that the apostles applied the term "elect" or "chosen" to all the spiritual men and women of the apostolic church, who were "called to be saints."

Slighter still is the suggestion that the election of grace is simply equivalent to the pre-cognisance by God of those who should believe in Christ. This explanation makes the election of grace of no effect, and simply explains it away as a superfluous term with no definite content. According to this view, nothing would be lost by its absence from the pages of the New Testament, for it only seems to express a new idea, without actually doing so. It is impossible to read the New Testament with reverent attention, and accept such a conclusion. The "prognosis" of Divine election means a great deal more than what we ordinarily mean by "foreknowledge." The election of grace is an active and selective power, a Divine energy which lays hold of the "elect" with potencies of life. It is in the election of grace that God assures the triumph of His kingdom. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" is the music of Divine triumph.

III. While the election of grace is a great deep, some elements in it stand out in relief.

The election of grace includes special activities of grace as operative upon the elect. Even this may puzzle our understanding, but a little consideration will show that it does not conflict with any moral law, and may indicate the highest operations of transcendent wisdom in carrying out the great world-purpose of love and grace. The old illustration of election, which furnished the foreshadowing

of the New Testament election of grace, was the ancient election of Israel to be the people of God. The terse form of the old formula of preference: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," may sound harsh to us, but the principle is actually embedded in the history of the races. Israel was chosen to stand under the brightest blaze of the Divine revelation. The central spiritual energies of the self-revealing God surged around this favoured people. Theirs was the law, theirs were the prophets. Of them, according to the flesh, the Christ came.

Yet in this act of election, for which we can give no reason behind the purpose of God, the righteousness and the love of God are historically manifested and glorified. By electing this focus and centre in the midst of the nations God kindled a central fire of worship which nothing has been able to quench. By concentrating upon it the glories of His spiritual presence and power, He kept His revealed truth from being dissipated, and created and sustained a sacred centre from which His light and His truth should go bravely through the world at last.

The same thing is true respecting the choice of His disciples by Jesus. These men were privileged above all others in beholding the glory of the Son of Man. The vast and holy energies of His immediate presence were poured upon them night and

day, while all around the multitudes caught comparatively but glimpses of His glory. These Galilean fishermen could not have told you why they were thus favoured by the choice of the Son of God, but the gracious purpose of it is clear. It was thus that Jesus created in the centre of the world heroic witnesses who should be filled with the Holy Ghost and with power, and compass sea and land to give to men the message of His grace. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you; and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain." This is the "consciousness of election" experienced by so many saints, the consciousness of a marvellous and unwearying impact of Divine grace upon their lives, a following and mighty love that would not let them go, a special focussing of the heart of God upon them, by which they were at length arrested, and which afterwards seemed to them absolutely irresistible. Then they gladly cry: "I am singled out by God: no sin must touch me."

It is clear that this election is not exclusive in its nature, but rather Divinely inclusive in its purpose. Each focussing of Divine grace is for larger extension. It is a pity that the intense consciousness of personal election felt by so many saints in days gone by was wrongly interpreted as holy exclusiveness. Intensity was mistaken for solitariness. This subjective interpretation needed more careful correc-

tion from the written word of grace. The feeling of spiritual exclusiveness is useful up to a certain point in resisting the contamination of the world, but beyond that point it hinders the life's generous service of love and hope. Ancient Israel also made the same mistake, and imagined that God's election of their people included God's rejection of His other nations upon the earth. At first they were built up in truth and holiness by their separateness, but at length they died in their exclusiveness as in a walled sepulchre. The particularity of Divine election is the gateway of universal grace. Each elect saint is to become, through his Master, a saviour of others. The disciples understood this to be involved in their Master's choice of them, and many believed through their testimony. They went forth to bear fruit, and their fruit remains to this day.

The election of grace, mighty as its activity and energy are, does not compel salvation. In this we discern in awful lines the freedom of man and the righteousness of God. The election of grace is not compulsion. To the spiritual forces of Divine grace man must of his own will open the gates of his life, and he still has power to refuse to open them. There is no doctrine of the New Testament which breaks down the freedom of man, for the whole work of redemption implies human freedom in moral and spiritual things. It is true that it is very difficult

to resist the power of elective grace. It is the concentration of that Divine might by which the human spirit is subdued to the Son of God. To harden the heart against this is the sin of sins, the ultimate insult to the powers of redeeming love. The responsibility of those upon whom this supreme " choice " falls is tremendous. Yet let us remember with awe that failure is still possible even here, because man is free. Hence Peter warns the saints to " make their calling and election sure." Paul declared that he kept his body in subjection, lest, after he had preached to others, he himself might prove a castaway. But most terrible of all are the words of Jesus, " Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil ? " Yet no one can defy such grace as this, save a " son of perdition."

A robust faith in the election of grace, even when attended with some misconceptions, gave men a grand belief in the victorious government of God and in the ordered triumph of His purpose in grace. In these days we need this high faith, weaned from all alloy, to be our guiding star in the midst of the confusions of the world. God is not passive, simply waiting for the world to come round to Him. His plan is ordered and sure, and His elections are written in His book from eternity. He will do that which He has purposed, and gather His elect from one end of the heaven to the other. There are deeps in this great truth which we cannot fathom,

but we can see order in the heavens, and the assurance of the completion of God's kingdom on the earth. Things do not move at random. The Lord knoweth them that are His. Having loved His own, He loves them even to the end.

Some of us know something of the exquisiteness of the responsive love which comes to us when we realise our election in the grace of God. We see how we were apprehended by Jesus Christ. We see how God's love pursued us, and wearied not until it led us into light and joy in spite of our waywardness and sin. We cannot understand it all. But we can hear the voice of Jesus say to us: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, to go forth and bear much fruit." And we cry, Master, Thy great love constrains us, for Thy love is life. We will be Thy bond-slaves evermore.

XIV

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. Ye know Him; for He abideth with you, and shall be in you.—JOHN XIV. 16, 17.

JOHN tells us in his epistle that the old commandment which was from the beginning, namely, the command to love one another, has become a new commandment in Jesus Christ. Baptised in the new revelation of God's love in Christ, it has received deeper meaning and has been lifted into unimagined glory. In like manner we may say that the revelation of the Holy Spirit, which was from the beginning, has become a new revelation in the dispensation of the gospel. It is as something marvellously new that the Saviour speaks of the advent of the Holy Spirit to His disciples. The specific relation of Christ to the coming of the Paraclete is marked in these closing discourses of His ministry as having two stages. It is first of all related to His Messianic work on the earth, the outcome of His earthly travail and intercession for men. "And I will pray the Father,

and He shall give you another Paraclete." On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is the gift of the ascended Lord to His people, the glorious completion of the powers of redemption which He has introduced into humanity. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But, if I go, I will send Him unto you."

The relation of the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant to the Holy Spirit of the Old Covenant may be illustrated by the relation of the "Word made flesh" to the Word that was already "in the world" before the Incarnation. He who came in the fulness of the days could say, "Before Abraham was, I am." Yet we know that His coming in the flesh marked a new epoch in the world. Although there is a sense in which the "Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world," yet heaven and earth were shaken to their centre when He actually "bore our sins in His own body on the tree," and broke asunder the bands of death. When the redeeming Son of God poured the tides of His love and self-sacrifice through the flood-gates of time, and was manifested in the throes of self-sacrifice in the time-history of our world, His self-manifestation gave time itself a new beginning. The world was re-dated from the time of His appearance in the flesh. Hence, although He was in the world from the beginning, and the world was

made through Him, yet a new heaven and a new earth were latent in His Messianic cry: "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God."

The work of the Holy Spirit in humanity began with the work of the redeeming Son, and this work began with the beginning of sin in our race. Redemption in the heart of God was ready before sin struck. It did not arise as an after-thought, a hurried sequel to the ruin. Divine love was eternally ready for emergencies. When the devil struck his satanic blow at our race, the cross was already in the way of his success. In the heart of the atoning God, the cause of evil was already foredoomed to failure. And with the presence and operation of the redeeming Son appeared from the beginning the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit of truth. The work of atonement and the Divine work of holy spiritual energy are two sides of the same great operation of redemption, and are ever inseparable.

The work of the Holy Spirit is dependent upon the development of the redemptive work of the Son of God. Out of the progress of the work of redemption spiritual energies flow, and the Holy Spirit is ever the Revealer of the work of the Son of God. Hence, when the "Word became flesh," and the great atonement was effected on the cross, and the Son of God broke the bands of the grave, and ascended in glory to the right hand of God, the

new era of the manifestation of the Christ created directly and immediately a new era for the manifestation of the operations of the Holy Spirit. The work of revelation became vastly greater than before. The facts and powers of redemption assumed vaster proportions, and called for profounder and mightier spiritual application. As the Son of God had come in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit descended into the world for the exercise of new energies. The fullness of this new power could not come until the redemptive work of the Son of Man on the earth had been completed, and His Messianic work had been glorified by His exaltation. Even His earthly presence with His disciples, while as yet much of the glory of His work was concealed from them, could not convey to them the fulness of the new power. They could as yet feel only the foreshadowing of its approach. This suggestive gradation of the holy Power is given clearly in the closing words of my text. "He abideth with you, and shall be in you." At that time the power of the Holy Spirit, as compared with that which was coming, was as the influence of a power *beside* them compared with the energy of a power *within* them. Soon the great climax was to be reached, when they should be baptised with "the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Not to realise the power of the Holy Spirit is to miss the essence of the New Dispensation This is

the consummation of our Lord's exaltation to heaven. This is the earnest to His people of His second coming. This is the final power of salvation. They who reject the power of the Holy Spirit have nothing further offered. This is the eternal sin.

I. The finished work of Christ on earth ushered in a new era in the spiritual operation of Divine power.

It is to be noted that Jesus does not promise the continuation of the presence of the Holy Spirit as an on-flow of spiritual power from the Old Covenant. He is making all things new. What He now promises is a new gift from heaven arising out of His own Messianic work. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." "If I go away, I will send Him to you." The Holy Spirit of the New Covenant is the specific gift of the Christ of the New Covenant to His people. The Holy Spirit of the New Covenant is a new power commensurate with the new facts and energies of redemption which the Christ has introduced into the world.

This new spiritual Power is related to a vaster revelation of Divine truth. Spiritual truth can be apprehended only by the spiritual faculty. The greater the truth revealed, the greater will be the spiritual illumination required for the understanding of it. Clearly, the work of Jesus brought to mankind a new revelation of spiritual things which

was not less than revolutionary. It was so revolutionary that the Jews themselves, whose law and prophets He came to fulfil, were bewildered by it To them it seemed to turn the world of known truth upside down. It was a hard saying, which they could not bear. In the light which we possess in the Holy Spirit, we can clearly see how the Old Covenant foreshadowed the New. Yet we can also see in what marvellous and unexpected ways the new world was created out of that which was preparing for it. It is not only a long journey from Sinai to Calvary, but in many respects upon that journey, as we reach the place of sacrifice, we find ourselves in a new world and under new skies. Even in that in which Sinai was specifically great, namely, in the revelation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its shadows are faint compared with the awful night which Calvary hangs over sin's nameless abysses of horror. The new revelation of God's love is an infinite wonder, a wonder bathed in mysterious sufferings that throb in the heart of God. The beauty of Divine grace is set in new enchantments and flows in new tides of life. The glory of the human spirit receives new splendour from the glory of the spirit of the Son of Man. Life and immortality crept out of the shadows, and became refulgent in the light of redeeming love. For this new world of revealed truth there was necessary the advent of a new spiritual Power of

illumination from God. It was necessary that the ascended Christ should send down to the world the "Spirit of truth," to lead His people into the new truths of His great kingdom.

New truth comes in order to create new and larger life. Because Jesus is the truth, He is also the Life. The children of the larger revelation must become the children of the larger power, else the revelation falls fruitlessly to the ground. Therefore the Holy Spirit who comes to give fullness to the work of Jesus must communicate new power proportionate to the new revelation. The new kingdom is to be marked by profounder spiritual life, by a clearer vision of eternal things, by a more vivid consciousness of sin, by mightier energies of holiness, by a diviner dynamic of spiritual love. In the might of inward spiritual force men and women are to occupy the heavenly places with Christ. To this end they must be endued with new power, with a vaster momentum of spiritual energy. There need be no hesitation in affirming that the communication of inward spiritual power is the fundamental office of the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant. It is through this new influx of spiritual power that the new illumination is given. "The spiritual man judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man." At Pentecost, and throughout the records of the Apostolic Church, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is fundamentally the giving of holy

power. The keynote of the Spirit's presence is given by our Saviour in such words as these: "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." This is the new spiritual power demanded by the new revelation. For, in view of the reception of this power, the Lord continued: "And ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The same central function is not obscurely intimated in these closing discourses in John's gospel. There is strong emphasis laid upon the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, because the understanding of, and the witness to, the new truths of redemption was a matter of supreme importance. But it is clear that our Saviour regards the "Spirit of truth" as making His communications through the medium of inward spiritual power. For truth in our Saviour's regard is not a thing of letters, but the inward power of recognising Divine manifestations. "He that is of the truth heareth My voice." "He abideth with you, and shall be in you." There can be little doubt that the fundamental suggestion of the term, Paraclete, used by Jesus to denote the Holy Spirit, is a suggestion of power. Although the Greeks freely used the term in the sense of Advocate, the context shows that neither that

sense, nor the related one of "Intercessor," is the fundamental one in our Saviour's mind. The idea of Advocate may possibly come in with respect to the convicting of the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, if the Church be conceived as presenting its case in opposition to the world. But the central idea all along the line in our Saviour's description is that of mighty assistance. The meaning of Paraclete, as directed by the context, is that of Helper, the One who comes to give aid and strength. The Holy Spirit is to come to the aid of the disciples, to be within them a holy power and illumination which shall enable them to be efficient witnesses to the new truths of redemption both in their utterances and in their lives.

This new communication of inward spiritual power was accompanied by new manifestations of power towards the world. The new light within rayed visibly outwards. The new power of the Spirit made its impact felt marvellously upon men. The new power of the Holy Spirit was not to be a hidden power, but was to direct itself with manifest potencies upon the world. The disciples were to be "clothed" with power, so that men might see them garbed in it as in a vesture. They were to be baptised in the Holy Ghost and in fire, so that men might feel the heat and the power of the holy flame. It is true that Jesus said concerning the Spirit of truth: "Whom the world cannot re-

ceive ; for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him " ; just as Paul said : " Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." Yet there is a manifested power of the Holy Spirit which is continually directed upon the world for the removal of its blindness. This is the attack of the spiritual Church upon the world. It is to face the world " full of the Holy Ghost and of power." It is in this power its victory lies. It is impotent, if it seek to do its work by any other power. It must " tarry," until it be clothed with power from on high. It is by this manifested holy power of the people of God that the Holy Spirit " convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." It is the " Spirit and the Bride " that say " Come " to the blind and hesitating world.

These new manifestations of holy power were the secret of the success of the Apostolic Church. We must carefully remember that it was the " power," not the " powers," at Pentecost and afterwards that essentially counted. In my text, and in the whole of this closing discourse of Jesus, the promise He gives His disciples is that of their reception and manifestation of holy energy. This is to fit them to reveal Him to the world. Some people have been so enamoured of certain " powers " at Pentecost that they have forgotten to travail for the

" power." Some have hungered for the gift of " tongues," while they have forgotten the more excellent way of love. We find an example of this in the Corinthian Church. They prided themselves on their spiritual " gifts," when they ought to have been lamenting their lack of spiritual power. Paul had the gift of " tongues," but he regarded his gift of preaching with consecrated spirit the Gospel of his Master as a far higher manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us take care of the " power," and the " powers " will take care of themselves. Let us guard the supreme miracle of spiritual love, and all lesser " miraculous gifts " will take their true perspective. If we could astonish the world with some sensational display of supernatural powers, such as some appear to desire, nobody would be converted by it. Doubtless there were special reasons for the unusual display at Pentecost, and for certain " gifts " in the early Church. But it was the holy power manifested through the apostles and the early disciples that impressed and converted unbelievers. The miraculous occurrences were only signs. The word was " with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power," because these men and women were filled with the Holy Ghost. Hence of necessity the " signs " grew less and less, while the essential power of the Holy Spirit affirmed its all-sufficient and omnipotent sway. This is the last word of the

power of the Church of Christ: "He abideth with you, and shall be in you."

II. The function of the Holy Spirit is the complete fulfilment in the world of the redemptive power and purpose of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit of the New Covenant is sent by the ascended Christ specifically and solely for the glorification of His redemptive work. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and declare it unto you." As the Christ is the perfect Revealer of the Father, so the Holy Spirit is the perfect Revealer of the Christ; and therefore comes from both the Father and the Son as the complete manifestation of both. When Jesus says that the Paraclete "shall guide you into all the truth," it is clear from the context that He is thinking solely of the Divine and eternal truth of which He Himself was the complete revelation and incarnation. The assertion involved the same majestic and stupendous claim as when He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This, of course, does not mean that the Spirit, as the eternal completion of the Divine Trinity, has no sphere of operation outside of the work of human redemption even on the earth. By His Spirit God has "garnished the heavens." By His Spirit He sustains our natural life, and gives vitality to our natural powers. His Spirit makes possible the mental and moral movements of our race. Yet even in this wider realm the Spirit is

still the Revealer of the Son, " through whom God made the worlds." But it is clear that the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit of human redemption, has no other function than that of glorifying Christ as the Redeemer of men, and the redemption which is in Him. The work of the " Paraclete " is all in Christ.

In these days of supposed breadth and generosity, there are those who adjure us to take a broader view of the operations of the Holy Spirit in human life, and thus give a more comprehensive and reasonable cast to the message of Christianity. It is a very old, but not necessarily honourable, expedient to give away what is not ours to give, in order to invest ourselves with an easy semblance of generosity. " Let us patronise all the world's highways," they cry. " Let us acknowledge the Holy Spirit in all human movements, in all religious systems, in all mental achievements, and in all social ideals. Let us not insist solely on the specific way of redemption in Christ, but open out the broad ways of the world as equally leading to the city of God, and as vitalised by the breathing of the Holy Spirit." There is plausibility in this cry, but the falsehood of it is greater than its veil of plausibility can hide. It is not for us to determine how far the power of the redeeming Christ extends its subtle and holy influence through the tides of human life, how far it has affected and affects the religions of the

world, and how far it touches the secular movements of human life. Wherever the redemptive power of Jesus Christ reaches, there the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant also operates. But the Saviour makes it clear that the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit among men has reference directly and only to Him. If the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, this conviction is in direct reference to Christ: "Because they believe not on Me." If the Spirit convicts the world of righteousness, it is specifically, "because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more." If the Spirit convicts the world of judgment, it is "because the prince of this world has been judged"—a clear reference to the judgment of His Messianic triumph upon the prince of evil. We may seem to broaden things by going outside of the redemption in the Crucified, but we make the waters of salvation too shallow to give life. After all, the cross is not narrow, save to those who do not understand how broad must be the flow out of its boundless deep of Divine grace. It is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The Crucified is to draw all men unto Him. The work of the Paraclete is to reveal the Christ of the cross as the one Saviour of men. Hence the need of the great commission to preach the gospel of the cross to all the world.

The Holy Spirit reveals Christ by means of the interpretation of His word. The wonderful subjective experience of the Holy Spirit by the be-

liever was not to supersede the need of the objective revelation of Jesus. "The Paraclete, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you." How great and kindly is the Divine sanity of provision for us compared with the one-sided speculations of men! How many are willing to plunge into the abysses of pure subjectivity, under the plausible hypothesis of the sufficiency of the soul's spiritual experience of God! It is the strongest spiritual men who are most keenly aware that they are not strong enough for such a venture. Vagueness, extravagance, and error wait upon those who presumptuously leap from the revealed "stairway to heaven" into the unfathomed abysses of truth. The inward revelation of the Holy Spirit interprets and glorifies the objective truths revealed in and by Jesus Christ. The Spirit cannot speak in another voice than that of the Lord Christ. All who claim the authority of the Spirit for another message than that which Jesus has once for all given to the world have fallen into a grave mistake. The ever-enlarging interpretation of that word and that Christ is the genuine work of the Holy Spirit. "He shall not speak from Himself; but whatsoever things He shall hear, these shall He speak. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you."

In and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the Christ returns to dwell in and with His people. For the operation of the Holy Spirit is the full revelation and operation of the redemptive life of Christ. Hence Jesus uses similar terms concerning His own relation and the Holy Spirit's relation to His disciples: "Whom the world cannot receive, for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; ye know Him, for He abideth with you, and shall be in you." "Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth Me no more; but ye behold Me: because I live, ye shall live also." The Holy Spirit does not supersede the work of the Son, but gives it its fulness of glory and completeness. In the indwelling of the Spirit, Jesus attains His fullest indwelling. In the work of the Spirit Jesus does His greatest work in His people. "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also. And greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto the Father."

In the work of the Holy Spirit, the redemptive energy of the Deity in its full and complete glory of redemptive power enters into human life. In the redemptive work of the Son the Father is immanent, and in the redemptive work of the Spirit the Son is glorified. Here is the triune energy of God. Here is the secret of the power of the new kingdom. Here is the unrivalled glory of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Here is the glad assurance

for those who are loyal to the Christ of the cross. Such a revelation as this of the triune God, the revelation of the unfolding life of the Divine Trinity in the love and grace and power of human redemption, causes all speculation about this ultimate mystery of Being to be lost in love and worship before the amazing beauty of God. New music grows in the benediction of benedictions: "May the grace of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the love of God, our Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you, now and evermore. Amen."

XV

THE COMPANIONSHIP OF JESUS

Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth Me no more; but ye behold Me. . . . He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.

JOHN XIV. 19, 9.

THE capacity for the worship of God is man's highest glory. Those who proudly define man as the "thinker" have not reached the highest summit of his privilege and power. No doubt it is the nature of thought to traverse universal being, and this is part of that eternity which God has written in the heart of man. But in worship man enters into immediate personal fellowship with the eternal Being, in whom and through whom all things are. We cannot conceive of any creature rising higher than this peak of spiritual glory. Nay, in this man is revealed as "a little lower than Elohim," for this fellowship is no uncertain image of the eternal fellowship within the Deity itself. This beam of glory shines forth in the words of Jesus: "I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me; even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father."

This power and privilege of worship is, however, sometimes interpreted too generally, and some-

times too narrowly. I have heard some say that all Christian service is an act of worship, and this is said occasionally with a slight tendency to depreciate the set hour and attitude of spiritual fellowship with God. It is far from me to question the greatness and holiness of service and life's sacred practical activities ; but neither understanding nor spirit will gain by confusing things that differ, and by denying any definite meaning to terms. Service as such is one thing, and worship as such is another thing. Service may arise out of worship, and it may be bathed, even in the performance, in the spirit and atmosphere of worship. But there may be worship in which what is called service is for the moment still ; and there may be service in which there is no worship. Each has its own meaning, place, function, and power.

More commonly the conception of worship is narrowed down to that of prayer. This misconception may mean a serious loss to spiritual experience, a loss which is, I fear, characteristic of the present times. Worship is a much profounder thing than the specific activity of prayer. Worship is the conscious baptism of the spirit in the glory of God. There may be worship without a syllable of prayer, and alas ! there may be prayer sadly divorced from worship. In prayer the mind is occupied with specific requests and expectations ; in worship the immediate experience is all in all. In prayer the

petitioner's thoughts gather around himself and his needs; in worship self is forgotten in the sublime consciousness of God. The old Christian mystics understood the blessedness and the power of worship, the awful glory of immersing their whole being in the Divine presence, without a cry and without a desire save to know God, to veil themselves in reverence, and to cry with the seraphim, "Holy, Holy, Holy." Have we forgotten the secret of this supreme glory in these practical days, when we are so busily bent upon glorifying the works of our own hands, and imagine that all God's universal heaven has been compressed into the small activities which we proudly label "service"?

I have said there may be a kind of prayer divorced from worship. Yet all true and potent prayer must flow out of worship and remain in its atmosphere. Prayer is great when it is the utterance of a spirit bathed in worship. Complaints are made that our Church prayer meetings lack power and interest, and the complaints are not made without reason. Many prayers fall dull and heavy upon ear and heart because there is no holy vitality of worship behind them. They are not touched with the glory from the mount. They might have been taken out of a ledger in a business office. Some would cure the dreariness of the condemned prayer meeting by introducing pleasant and lively elements. You may as well try to cure a sick man by

clothing him in purple and fine linen. If men come to the prayer meeting bathed in worship, then their prayers will be living forces, a holy energy to be felt by all. The glory of God will fill the place. In the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples, petition is baptised in worship. What is the tenor of it ? Is it, " Our Father, which art in heaven, Thy kingdom come ! Give us this day our daily bread " ? Nay, first the baptism in the glory. " Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name ! " That is worship. " Hallowed be Thy name ! " That is equivalent to the cry of the seraphim who worship everlastingly : " Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts ! "

An exquisite element in true worship is the sense of comradeship with God. The intimacy of worship deepens into the intimacy of love. This is a marvellous claim on the part of the human spirit, to have God for Companion and Friend. Yet it has been sought and allowed from the beginning of man's seeking after God. It meets us in a striking way at the beginning of the sacred Scriptures and in an unexpected connection. That long genealogy of the beginnings of human life given in the fifth chapter of Genesis is not, even if we leave the Higher Critics out of account, very exhilarating reading. We struggle through a bare record of births and deaths, a monotonous picture of the fading destinies of man. But suddenly we are rewarded.

The pillar of fire is seen in the wilderness. The fire burns in the bush. A vision breaks suddenly upon us such as can only be found in the book of Divine inspiration. The deep secret of God and Man is revealed: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." The human spirit had sought and found the companionship of the eternal God.

In the present discourse, guided by my text, I propose to take this holy requirement of the human spirit as a test of the true conception of God. No lengthy demonstration is needed of the justice of this criterion. As far as I am personally affected, the demand of this criterion is dominant in my intensest spiritual experience. My spirit cries out for a God near at hand, a God who will love me and be near me at all times. My weakness is so great and my need so constant that, great as the presumption may appear, I must know God as my near Companion and Friend, a "very present help in trouble." I must rest in His love and in His guiding hand in life and in death. I must be able to say with vivid personal experience of God's comradeship and love: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me." But it is more important for my message that my experience is at one with the holy experience of the human spirit as revealed in the book of God. The "heart

and the flesh "—the whole intense personality—of the saints of the Old Covenant "cried out for the living God." In the New Covenant the saints enter into loving fellowship with Christ, who is the perfect revelation of the Father. He calls them His "friends," and promises to be with them even to the end of the days. In the text He identifies His companionship with the companionship of the Father: "Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth Me no more; but ye behold Me. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

I. Some modern conceptions of God are rejected by this criterion of loving companionship.

The conception of God as a merely universal and eternal Power fails to stand this test. Some have imagined that they have done quite brilliantly in rejecting the Christian God in favour of a scientific or philosophic conception of a universal force or a universal life concerning which nothing more can or need be known. They have smiled at the Christian belief in the moral and spiritual and personal attributes of God, and invited us to the reasonable and intelligent conception of a universal Power infinitely removed above all specific qualities and attributes. They do not realise that, in stripping God of moral and spiritual qualities, they despoil Him of Divine glories for which their high-sounding philosophic designations for Him cannot compensate in the least. Their God is not

great enough to meet the demands of the human spirit. The true God must have power to be the Friend and Companion of the soul that trusts Him. Concerning Him we must be able to say, "The eternal God is my refuge, and beneath me are the everlasting arms."

This merely universal conception of God, even if it put on a moral quality, still fails to stand this sacred and beautiful test. All readers are familiar with Matthew Arnold's famous attempt to define God as the universal Power of morality. The definition is as suggestive in its admissions as in its tacit denials. God is "a Power not ourselves, making for righteousness." The admission of the essentially moral nature of God would have carried Matthew Arnold into the fullness of the Christian conception of God, if he had known how to follow the religious logic of it. But, as the definition stands, it fails through the pomposity of aloofness. For God is not pompous. I had almost dared to say that God is the eternal "Child." Let us suppose some one in the Arnoldian vein giving a child a definition of its mother. The definition would run somewhat thus: "My Child, your mother is a power not yourself making for your comfort." If the child could understand the pompous phrasing, it is easy to imagine its reply. It would say, "You surely are not talking about my mother! If you are, you don't know my mother at all; for

she is not a bit like that. My mother has beautiful eyes of love watching me all the day long. My mother has such gentle hands to help me, and to wipe my tears away. My mother has such a soft, warm bosom where she shelters me, and sends me to sleep. My mother kisses all my aches and pains away, and I always run to her when I am frightened. That's my mother."

And the child of God has the same thing to say about his Father when a cold philosophy comes along with its icy breath, and says: "Your God is a Power not yourself making for righteousness." The answer is swift and clear: "You are surely not talking about my heavenly Father! If you are, you don't know my Father at all; for He is not a bit like that. My Father has beautiful eyes of love watching me all the day long. My Father has such gentle hands to help me, and to wipe my tears away. My Father has such a soft, warm bosom where He shelters me, and gives His beloved sleep. My Father kisses me with the kisses of His love, until my aches and pains pass away, and I am glad in Him. What time I am afraid, I run to Him for shelter, and He saves me. That's my Father and my God."

II. This test shows Jesus Christ to be the highest revelation of God to the human spirit. "I will not leave you orphaned. I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth

Me no more. But ye behold Me. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In the God-revealing Son of Man the Divine companionship is finally and completely manifested.

Against this glorious revelation scepticism launches its curious objection of anthropomorphism. It is sometimes busy with this objection in the Old Testament scriptures, where it has somewhat foolishly literalised metaphorical representations of the Divine activities. But there is a deeper humanism of the Deity in the Old Testament against which this charge of anthropomorphism can be more justly made, and which finds its perfect consummation in the incarnation of the Son of God. It finds complete expression in our Saviour's claim: "I and the Father are one. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

What, then, of this objection? When any one objects to the God of the Christian as partaking of the likeness of man, I turn to ascertain what manner of God they would offer us instead. And I find that, if they acknowledge a God at all, their Deity is formed in the likeness of a vast machine, a great mechanism of force operating by material laws, a blind engine charged with universal energy, a sort of universal motor-car or aeroplane. And I say to them, "You, at any rate, have no right to complain of the anthropomorphic character of the Christian Deity. If we are anthropomorphic

in our conception of God, you are machinomorphic. And every child ought to know that man is greater than a machine."

When I went recently for a preaching tour to the United States of America, I found the American papers full of a speech just delivered by President Elliot, of Harvard University. Christian ministers were being challenged by the Press to reply to it. The gist of it seemed to be that President Elliot with his students had discovered in the course of their studies some new ideas of God by which the old Christian idea was to be soon and for ever abolished. It was a portentous utterance, such as one might be expected to make on the strength of some marvellous and revolutionary discovery. The key-sentence, however, was this: "The God of the future is not to be a deified Man." This advertised novelty read to me very much like an old and commonplace scepticism with which even the new world of the West must have been long familiar. Everywhere I inquired if anybody knew what President Elliot and his students had discovered, but nobody could tell me. Here was a wonderful thing! Surely, these revolutionary discoveries, which were to turn theology upside down, urgently called for enthusiastic propagation. But the oracle suddenly grew dumb, and nobody cared to know, and not a single new idea about God could be found haunting any part of the great continent

where President Elliot has his dwelling. It was just the well-worn plan of advertising old scepticisms as new discoveries : one of the old attacks on the gospel of the Incarnation with the old weapons, weapons grown so rusty that they had to be furbished to look like new. It was just one of our old sceptical antagonists objecting to the vital and glorious gospel of " God manifest in the flesh," and offering us instead the latest patented universal deification of material force.

The folly of this scepticism is manifest. If we are not to conceive God in the highest terms of moral and spiritual manhood, we can only conceive Him in terms of some inferior force. We could not conceive God aright at all, if He had not made us in His own image, after His own likeness. It is there, or nowhere, that we must trace the image of His glory. If God is not Spirit, what is He ? If God is not a moral and spiritual Life, what is He ? If God is not righteousness and love and truth, what is He ? There is no discovery concerning God possible which can give us a higher revelation of Him than that which is given in the all-glorious Son of Man, the effulgence of His glory and the very impress of His person.

In the God revealed in Christ the supreme test of the true God is satisfied. " This is the true God, and eternal life." The disciples found in Him the comradeship of God in its deepest and sweetest

secret. They saw that God was glorified in this human nearness to them. It was the highest glory of God's omnipotence to be able to come so near. They saw the light of God's love in His holy eyes, heard the music of God's love in His voice, felt the help and the healing of God in His touch of power. They needed nothing more for life or death. They " beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." They knew that in seeing Him, they had seen the Father.

III. It is our duty and privilege to cultivate the realisation of the companionship of Jesus.

Jesus, in accordance with His promise, has returned through and with the Holy Spirit, to give His people the fullness of Divine companionship until the end of time. " Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me." " Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world-age." But I fear that Christian men and women do not know the power and joy of this wonderful companionship of their Lord as they might do. We need to cultivate the faculty of sacred imagination, the power of realising the unseen. Let me illustrate. There is that lad that is breaking his mother's heart. Perhaps he is really not a vicious boy at heart. If he knew the heartache he is causing his mother, he would torment her no longer. He would leave his evil ways, and make

her glad again. But he does not realise what he is doing. He is deficient in the sympathetic faculty of imagination. You know the picture of Dives, with Lazarus at his gate. We think and say hard things about Dives, and hold the place of torment to be but due retribution. We already put him through the purgatory of our fierce condemnation. He is not always such a monster as we think. He has, perhaps, not realised that Lazarus is at his gate full of sores. If he had sympathetic imagination enough to realise Lazarus, perhaps he would act differently, adopt a higher and nobler method of action.

The blindness of many Christians to the presence of their Lord is analogous to the circumstances of these illustrations. He knocks at the gates of their life, but they do not hear. He stands by their side, but they do not see Him. They are touched with the blindness of the world, and do not behold the unseen glory. If the blindness deepens, it may become fatal. Let us therefore awake to our privilege. Let us cultivate a sensitive spiritual imagination through prayer and spiritual exercise, and we too shall be able to say with Paul, " The Lord Jesus stood by me."

You probably read some while ago the record of a life in which this faculty of sacred imagination to realise the companionship of Jesus was sedulously and beautifully cultivated. The man to whom I

refer took the Master at His word, knowing that He was always present. He determined that he would not miss the realisation of his Lord's companionship. Under all circumstances, whether at meals or on other occasions, the place of honour was reserved for the Master. And, knowing that the Lord was always present, his eyes grew clearer and clearer to discern the present glory, and to enjoy the blessed companionship of his adored Lord. We may not use the same means as this consecrated life employed for the cultivation of our spiritual imagination, but by equally definite means we should seek to attain the same happy end. Then shall we daily walk with Jesus, and never lose the vision of " the King in His beauty " by our side.

IV. The realisation of the companionship of Jesus will have important consequences upon our earthly life.

Conscious companionship with Jesus will give distinction and elevation to the daily pathway of our life. Companionship is a mighty influence. Association with greatness is a beneficent force. A man may disgrace the memory of a noble ancestry ; yet many noble deeds have been done for the honour of their name. A man may dishonour the name of a godly father ; yet many have walked in paths of virtue through the influence and for the sake of a noble parent. What power, then, it must

exercise over a man's life to realise that he is a companion of the Son of God, and that day by day the Lord of glory is with him, the companion of his way! It is when we forget the presence of the Christ that we fall from our high ideals, and are not ashamed to do the ignoble thing. If we saw Him beside us in our home, we should make our home a sanctuary of unfailing love. If we knew Him beside us in our office, we should make our business chambers sanctuaries of righteousness, a part of the King's treasury. If we knew Him beside us in our lonely hours, we should make our thoughts as white as snow. We should be ashamed of all selfishness and sin in His white presence. But we forget. His glory fades from our vision, and then we fall. It should not be so. We should constantly behold the vision of glory which the world cannot see.

If we realised the present Christ in our churches, what a difference it would make! It is an old story, that of the stranger who received no welcome in a fashionable church, and who, on being told in answer to his inquiry that the name of the church was "Christ Church," sadly replied: "Then I suppose the Master is not at home to-day." But alas! it is still too often repeated in new forms. If we knew the Master to be at home, would jealousy and strife and division dare to show themselves before His face? The disciples could strive with one another

behind His back; but, when they got before His face, they were ashamed of it. We are greatly in need of the consciousness of the present and near companionship of our Lord. When it comes to us, we shall walk like gods on the earth, and be ashamed even of the garment spotted by the flesh.

The realisation of the companionship of Jesus would make every spot we tread sacred ground. The light of heaven would fall upon the earth, and no spot could be common to us any more. When Moses saw the fire in the bush, he heard a voice saying, "Take thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And, if we realised the glory of the Master by our side, the whole earth would become similarly holy, like the golden floor of the city of God.

Some years ago I had the privilege of visiting that land that has been called "holy" because the Son of God trod its hills and dales in the days of His flesh, because its fields were pressed by "those blessed feet once pierced for our salvation on the bitter cross." And, in truth, the thrill of the experience cannot be put into speech. It was a mighty thrill to walk among the hills of Nazareth, to climb where the boy Jesus must oftentimes have climbed, and to gather the lilies in which He saw the artistry of the Father's hand. It was a thrilling experience to sail on the Galilean lake where He taught and slept and walked the waters and hushed

the storm. It was an indescribable thrill to visit Bethlehem and Bethany and Olivet, where the overshadowings of His love seemed to linger still. What unutterable thoughts gathered around Gethsemane and the place called Calvary. A voice kept ever whispering: "Take thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

But, when I returned to our beloved England, new thoughts began to rise within me, not without self-reproach. I saw that, after all, I had been strangely insensitive to the holiest associations. I had felt the historical more than the present living Christ. I saw that the holiest spots were not those He trod some two thousand years ago, but the spots where the spirit communes with Him to-day. Since then the earth has been holier to me, and I have not been without knowledge of the thrill of His glorious presence as He has walked with me by the way. Here where we are is the "holy land" to-day. It is here He walks and talks with us in dear communion. It is here He hushes the tempest, and touches us with His healing hand. It is here we may hear Him sobbing over the lost. It is here we may hear the drip, drip of His agony for the salvation of souls. Here is the Calvary of His loving atonement for sin. It is here we may gaze at the print of the nails in His hands and feet, and the wound in His side. It is here we may lean on His

bosom, and be at rest. It is here we should walk with consecrated feet, and fill our spirits with the vision of His love.

"We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.
But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He,
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee."

XVI

THE FUNCTION OF PRAYER

He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him, and honour him.

PSALM XCI. 15.

WHEN unbelief comes in, the central things of religious faith are the first to be called in question. Man's natural positivism immediately sets about attacking the supernatural essence of faith. As Christianity is the most supernatural of all religions, the attack of scepticism is most hotly delivered against Christianity. The attack develops first against its fundamental and formative facts and doctrines. To naturalism the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection from the Dead are an offence, the belief in the present activity of the enthroned Christ is foolishness, the hope of His coming in glory a delusion. As the moral and spiritual powers of the Christian life are supernaturally derived, the attack develops against the Christian claim in this regard. Moral and spiritual regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit by faith in the Son of God, fellowship with the personal God in Christ,

righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, sanctifying grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, all these are treated with the lip of scorn. And because prayer is the key that opens the supernatural gates of power, it is either dismissed as futile and foolish, or submitted to a process of reduction by which it becomes a purely natural energy, untouched by the light and love and redemptive freedom of the Father in heaven.

The signs of the times in this matter are somewhat ambiguous and perplexing. If one ventured on the assertion that the tendency is naturalistic and materialistic, it would be easy for an antagonist to point out that the evidence for the presence and power of the supernatural is impressing itself in an unprecedented way even on philosophy and science. If, on the other hand, one chanted a modern triumph for faith in the supernatural, this also might be met by showing the aggressive boldness of modern naturalism, which would make all religion, including Christianity, a product of natural evolution, and applies to the Word of God itself a criticism the bases and axioms of which are naturalistic. The truth seems to be that the acknowledgment of a higher spiritual or supernatural plane of power is linked with the denial of the preternatural operation or manifestation of God. The spiritual world is as inexorably bound to an unbroken move-

ment of law and evolution as the material world is supposed to be. No room is allowed for the freedom of Divine grace or the intervention of redeeming love, such as we find in the Incarnation of God, and in the whole revelation of the Gospel of Christ. Freedom, both human and Divine, is still stamped out by the universal sway of evolutionary law. There is no room for the spiritual child to expect love-gifts from the free hand of a loving Father in heaven.

We are thus confronted by three conceptions of the value of prayer. In the hard material conception we are told that prayer has no value whatever, that it is a delusion of superstition, and of ignorance of the fixed material constitution and order of the world. If it has any operation, it is a purely psychological one within the man himself, a self-impulsion which may so far minister a measure of self-created good or evil. It is simply a movement within himself, like the movement of a thought or a nerve.

The conception of prayer as a genuine force in an ordered universe of spiritual force leads us a step higher. In this conception of prayer the Deity is recognised in the form of spiritual energy, the dynamic spiritual centre of the spiritual world. Precisely analogous to the action of material force upon material force, prayer as a spiritual force impinges upon the central spiritual force of the

world, and the latter responds by the necessary and calculable law of spiritual reaction. The positive side of this conception contains a measure of important truth. Its grave defect is its implicit denial of the eternal freedom of the initiative of Divine love. It catches a glimpse of the truth through a glass darkly. It has been entangled in the net of law, and has failed to rise to the free heaven of love. It gives us only the response of force to force. It fails to see the emancipating vision of the free appeal of the trusting heart of the child to the loving heart of the Father in heaven. It misses the sublime essence of the function and power of true prayer.

The third conception is the consistent conception of the sacred Scriptures, and the vital experience of religious faith. It is based on the spiritual freedom of God and man. It regards God as Father, and as meeting those who seek Him with the personal response of love and of the gifts of love. It soars above all calculable processes of law into the transcendent freedom of love. This was the meaning of prayer to the saints of the Old Covenant, and nothing less than this. It was no mere theory, but daily experience. "I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me." They came to no inexorable reaction of a spiritual world-force, but to the "living God." "O Thou that hearest prayer," they cried, "unto Thee shall all flesh come." The man who affirms

a spiritual consciousness contrary to this is judged by the mighty roll of the generations of the men of prayer. Jesus affirmed this consciousness and this conception in its most beautiful simplicity. "Pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Jesus went as a Child to the Father, and He taught His followers to do the same. He did not teach them to pray: "O Thou infinite and eternal spiritual Force," but "Our Father, who art in heaven." This holy and beautiful teaching is summed up simply in the inspired words of the text: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him."

There is reason to fear that the Church of to-day has not been uninfluenced by the mechanical conception of prayer in one or both of the aspects I have mentioned. In this conception prayer loses its beauty and delight. It is limited to the working of a somewhat blind mechanism, and there is no inspiration to call men to the place of prayer. A vague fear has been created that prayer is of little value, that it is but an insignificant sound in the clank of the great engine of the universe. The central power of the free spirit of man, the prayer of faith to the living God, is in abeyance over a

large part of the Christian world. It is vagueness that frightens. A thing in the mist looms large. Let us give form to the spectre, and it will cease to terrify. The living Father calls us back to simple childlike faith in His love and freedom and power. "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him."

I. What does unbelief adduce, to dispute the efficacy of the prayer of faith?

In reference to the believing expectation of material gifts from God, unbelief declares this to be impossible, because the world of Nature is determined by fixed laws which cannot be altered. The grounds of this objection are so obvious that we need not greatly elaborate them. We are informed that the processes of Nature are inexorably uniform, determined to the very end of being by an unbroken and unbreaking chain of cause and effect, so that not the slightest change can possibly enter into the fixed process. Prayer for material gifts is therefore idle and foolish, because it seeks a rearrangement which cannot be made, and because every disposition of material things has already been determined in the constituted order of creation. By this dictum, often affirmed with an iron dogmatism which would be greatly censured in the doctrines of the Church, unbelief laughs the prayer of faith for material gifts and benedictions out of court.

In reference to the prayer of faith for gifts in

general, we are told that God has determined each one of our lives from the beginning, and that nothing can alter His plan. In this objection we come into the region where God is recognised, but is construed in terms of mechanical law and end. The vital action and eternal freedom of God are swallowed up in a fixed arrangement which is not less mechanical in its process than the materialistic conception of the natural creation. Just as each movement of the material creation is said to be predetermined from the beginning, so every movement and event of our lives is fixed by a Divine fiat which cannot be altered. The Divine architect cannot allow any interference with the scheme of our life which His supreme wisdom has devised. That would be the subordination of Divine wisdom to the imperfect wisdom of men. Therefore prayer cannot induce God to do anything that He had not previously determined to do, and can avail nothing. A very portentous argument! Yet probably these sceptics would be the very first to sneer at the rigid predestinations of Calvinism.

There is a third objection from men of higher vision, yet an objection scarcely less fatal to the enthusiasm of prayer. It affirms that God gives us the best He can do for us, and that our prayers cannot make God's best any better. They who speak thus do not deny the freedom or the love of God. On the contrary, they assert His love so

emphatically that they maintain the independence of His love-gifts of all human supplication. In this case, prayer is made superfluous, not because God is not free to give as and when He wills, but because His love can never give less than the best, and needs not to be influenced by the entreaties of men. There is charm in the manner of this statement, but it is a charm that would charm away the energy of the spiritual man's response to God, the vitalities of the human spirit that knock at the gates of heaven, and the sublime experiences of men and women that have waited upon God. It would reduce to inanity the music of the apostles and prophets: "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." It would discredit the Master's promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

II. What shall we say of the voice of modern compromise regarding the function of prayer?

There are always some timid minds frightened by the dogmatism of unbelief, and these fearfully suggest throwing out the cargo of faith in order to save the ship. There are others who are anxious to make a graceful compromise with the supposed modern equipment of scepticism, because they

imagine that such a *via media* smacks of modern culture, and shows them in the halo of modern illumination. They do not want to be convicted of the idea of a crude theology, that God and man can really have dealings with one another as Friend with friend. They want something more polished and philosophical and modernly invertebrate, some elegant platitude that will seem not to fling away the substance of religious faith, and yet not mean anything in particular. It is just this that modern compromise does with the function of prayer.

This is the elegant plausibility: "The value of prayer is, that as a sacred exercise of the soul it brings good to the mind of the worshipper." This feeble evasion is often buttressed by the quotation of the experience: "It is good for me to draw near to God"; as if the psalmist could possibly mean that the good he got from the presence of God was all the result of his own internal spiritual gymnastics! We know that the exercise of every faculty is useful; but in prayer the mere motion of the spirit is swallowed up in the sublime consciousness of God's presence and benediction. Prayer is a failure unless the God whom we approach responds to our cry.

The very possibility of using prayer as a spiritual exercise depends upon the supposedly false idea that God hears and answers prayer. They who

come to God " must believe that He is, and that He is the Rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." Unless we believed that the God of love responded to our call, prayer would become unreal, and would die for want of sustenance. Who would wrestle before the throne of grace, if there were no hand of grace to give gifts from the throne? Who would cry, " My Father," if there were no Father heart to love and no Father hand full of blessings for the child? A sacred function that is dependent upon a falsehood is inconceivable.

In this compromise with unbelief, prayer as supplication would cease, because of its known futility. But it may be said that praise would still remain, and that the exercise of the soul in praise to God is of great spiritual benefit. No one disputes the spiritual exhilaration and uplifting of true praise. But we must not forget the serious thing we have done in this subtle leap from prayer to simple praise. We have flung away as useless the mighty hope and joy of the generations of the saints, the holy instrument of faith which Jesus declared should make all things possible to those that believed in Him. We have theoretically destroyed the holy charter of prayer. Under the guise of cultured compromise, we have thrown away the greatest treasure of Christian faith.

And, after all, we cannot save even the remaining spiritual exercise of praise. Praise is kindled and

kept alive by our belief in the Father's loving-kindness, and by the conscious reception of His grace from day to day. The psalmist cried: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication." This was not the cry of selfishness. You cannot love any God except a God who is free to hear and help and save. Even our Saviour said: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me; and I know that Thou hearest Me always." If we knew that we stood before an impassive God, to whom our cry could make no difference, praise would be stifled on our lips. If praise is to remain as incense of power in our spirits, we must hear the Father say: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him, and honour him."

III. What shall we say as believers in the simple power of prayer?

When scepticism declares that the world of Nature is determined by fixed laws which cannot be altered, its assumption of a purely mechanical world is utterly unwarranted. We can say with far greater reason, that the constitution of the creation is spiritual, and that the freedom of spirituality is on the throne and at the centre of the material creation. There was a time when the Christian believer had to fight this battle against the false assumptions of a materialistic science,

but to-day it will suffice for me to quote an eminent scientific man whose words are death-blows to materialistic scepticism. Sir Oliver Lodge writes in the "Hibbert Journal" for July of the present year: "The modern superstition about the universe is that, being suffused with law and order, it contains nothing personal, nothing indeterminate, nothing unforeseen; that there is no room for the free activity of intelligent beings, that everything is mechanically determined; so that given the velocity and acceleration and position of every atom at any instant, the whole future could be unravelled by sufficient mathematical power.

"The doctrine of Uniformity and Determinism is supposed to be based upon experience. But experience includes the experiences of human beings; and some of them certainly appear to be of a capricious and undetermined character. Or without considering human beings, watch the orbits of a group of flies as they play; they are manifestly not controlled completely by mechanical laws as are the motions of the planets. The simplest view of their activity is that it is self-determined, that they are flying about at their own will, and turning when and where they choose. The conservation of energy has nothing to say against it. Here we see free will in its simplest form. Why not assume what is manifestly the truth, that free will exists, and has to be reckoned with, that the universe is

not a machine subject to outside forces, but a living organism with initiations of its own; and that the laws which govern it, though they include mechanical and physical and chemical laws, are not limited to those, but involve other and higher abstractions, which may perhaps some day be formulated, for life and mind and spirit?"

This witness is sufficient for my present purpose A true knowledge of the material world cannot deny the freedom of either God or man.

Experience equally disproves that God has mapped out the whole of our life independently of our own action and response. If a great scientist will allow free will to a group of flies, are we to disallow free will to the life and conduct of man? "They" (that is, the flies) "are flying about at their own will and turning when and where they choose." Yet we are asked to believe that man's life is as completely determined as the mechanical motions of the planets! We are asked to believe that there is no room for the free life of man to seek anything from God, and no room in the free life of God to give anything to man in response to that request. As if in the life of man there were not a myriad things done in defiance of the law and will of the God of righteousness and truth! God's plan is a plan of freedom, and man is one of the freest of the creatures of God. There is ample room in the plan of God for the

prayer of faith and for God's loving and living response.

Experience and reason contradict the assertion that God's best gifts can be, and are, given to us apart from prayer. This is the inveterate fallacy in which man is regarded as a mechanism and not as a free moral and spiritual being. To the creation, in so far as it is mechanical, God gives its complete store of mechanical energy as a matter of course. But to the human spirit God gives freedom, and in that freedom the power of appropriating more or less of the Divine benediction. God wills to give His best gifts to every man, but He is able to do so only in so far as man responds with the capacity of receiving them. Man's moral and spiritual relations with God are relations of freedom. The will of man in seeking must meet the will of God in giving. They that seek shall find. The Father who is in heaven "gives good things to those that ask Him." It is both beautiful and true that God's best gifts come to man in answer to the prayer of faith.

The freedom of God is not less in material things than in spiritual things, but man's need in respect of these things is fundamentally different. Spiritual gifts are man's essential and supreme need. The answer to the prayer for spiritual benediction is direct, complete, and absolute. There can be no reason for the withholding of spiritual benediction

except the spiritual incapacity of the life to receive it. So, when the spiritual gates of the soul are opened by the holy longing of sincere prayer, God answers the cry to the last possible measure of the spiritual gift. But material gifts must be subordinated to the higher spiritual dispensation of God. Prayer must ever be offered in the name of the Son of God, and His name is the very life of the Divine kingdom. There is no limit to the power of the prayer of faith, save the dominancy of the spiritual kingdom of God. And this, when rightly regarded, is not a limit, but the highest extension of power; so that verily to the prayer of faith "all things are possible." In the region of "Thy will be done" prayer claims its spiritual and heavenly kingship. All things are at the highest command and for the highest service of the man of faith. His prayer sweeps the compass of the gifts of God.

Clearly, then, the simplest and sublimest and truest view of prayer is the one known through the generations to Christian faith. It is the view and experience in which the saints of the Old Covenant rejoiced, and in which inspired psalmist and prophet exulted. It is the simple way of prayer in which Jesus approached His Father, and in which He taught His disciples to approach Him also. It is just the way of the child. This free personal relation gives greater dignity to man

and greater glory to God than the mechanical substitutes which scepticism and compromise would provide. The relation between the Divine Father and His children is the highest and most beautiful relation between God and man. This relation is known by the free spirit of man in vital union and fellowship with the free Spirit of God. We need to come back to the old simple way and attitude of approach to the living God. Christian men and women need this for the gladness and power and victory of their life. The Church needs it, for power to conquer the world. We have had enough of the follies of shallow philosophies. It is time to come back to the sanities and grandeurs of the spiritual experience of the saints of God, and above all of our great Lord and Master. "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

XVII

THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY

Also He hath set eternity in their heart.—Eccles. iii. 11.

Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die.—Hab. i. 12.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.—John xi. 25, 26.

THE consciousness of immortality is essential to the spirit of religion. Where religious truth and life are in a rudimentary condition, the stirrings of the sense of immortality may—to borrow a conception of modern psychology—belong to the latencies of subconsciousness. To use an older analogy, it may exist in germ, not yet unfolded into the clearness of doctrinal truth. But, whenever religious faith has well developed into understanding and the comprehension of its own implicit meanings, "life and immortality" must of necessity be "brought to light." It is sometimes objected to this view that parts of the Old Testament, while definitely religious, show scarcely any, or no, consciousness of immortality, but seem to immure the individual history hopelessly in the grave. But this is an exaggerated representation

founded on one-sided emphasis on fragmentary statements. The future is frequently veiled in shadows, and the notes of joyful anticipation of a life beyond are absent; but one has no need to read far before some throb is felt of the immortal beatings of the human spirit even in the midst of shadow and fear.

It is impossible otherwise to explain the way in which gleams of immortal hope suddenly flash out from the records of the Old Testament. A psalmist cries: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall dwell in safety. For Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Job cries out of the shadows: "But I know that my Vindicator liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last above the dust; and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." David cried concerning his dead child: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." It may be said that some of these utterances represent a later development of the conceptions of religion. But how could such development take place if the consciousness of immortality were not implicitly present from the

beginning ? And how could such a marvellous ray of illumination flash out from that most ancient genealogy : " And Enoch walked with God : and he was not ; for God took him " ?

It is clear that the later and grander developments of the spirit and illuminations of religion are dependent upon a definite and triumphant conception of immortality. The religious consciousness of immortality gradually grew out of vital spiritual union with God, but afterwards becomes the instrument by which the splendours of higher religious life are realised. The beautiful faith in God and the mighty inspirations of the religion of Jesus Christ could not be sustained on anything less than the clear revelation of " life and immortality." The necessary centre of this vaster world of illumination and power is the empty grave of Him who is the " resurrection and the life " for men. The great dynamic of the kingdom of God in Christ links together the cross and the resurrection. The cross of the believer became light, and the passion of his love was satisfied, in the promise : " Because I live, ye shall live also." The stronger our faith in immortality, the greater will be our power to partake of the energies of the Christ.

It is clear also that, at the present stage of religious development, the decay of the belief in immortality would be fatal both to morality and religion. Both of these have now been so far

established on the conception of, and the faith in, man's immortal destiny, that, if this faith were to fail, the whole sacred structure would be in danger of tumbling to the ground. Even if this faith were to be seriously weakened, the moral and religious consequences of such weakening would be very grave. Can we then be sure of this fundamental prop of the Christian faith, and effectually appeal to the men of to-day with the sanction of "the powers of the world to come"?

This subject is of exceptional interest at the present time, because the question of immortality is occupying the minds of scientific men in an unusual degree. I am not concerned in this discourse with the discussion of the perils connected with the modern cult of "spiritualists," or "spiritists," although the perils are obvious and serious. What is significant is that some eminent scientific men are taking an extraordinary interest in the question of human immortality, and are cherishing a curious and pathetic hope that certain "phenomena" will enable them to establish on a scientific basis the survival of the human spirit beyond death. The importance of this lies not in the likelihood of their achieving any such result by such dubious processes, but in the manifestation of the ineradicable intuition of immortality in the mind and heart of man, and in the admission that there are no scientific facts which can be reasonably

held to contradict the Christian's faith in the life eternal. We are glad to see science ceasing to obstruct. The great religious demonstration of immortality will take care of the rest. If they find not the faith of immortality in loving fellowship with God, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

We propose to take our demonstration of immortality along three stages, beginning with the lowest and most elementary evidence, and rising to the highest and completest. In this way our evidence will gain strength and fullness as we proceed, and we shall be able to show that the voice of immortality in man is a consistent utterance from its first whisper to its last shout of triumphant faith. From the old Preacher of the book of Ecclesiastes we shall learn the voice of immortality which God has put in the heart of the natural man. From the prophet Habakkuk we shall learn the assurance of immortality which God has given to the sincerely religious man. And in Jesus Christ we shall see and experience the resurrection and the life in the fulness of light and victory.

I. God has set the beam of immortality in the heart of the natural man. "Also He hath set eternity in their heart."

Even the most modern critic must admit that I have gone low enough for the first link in the

chain of demonstration, for the old Preacher has long borne the scorn of tongues. He has been labelled a pessimist, very often by those who did not understand him, and who therefore could not perceive the profound insight he displayed into both the vanities and the substance of life. It was worth while investigating a whole world of vanities to arrive at such a profound utterance as that of my text. All the world is fleeting around the old Preacher, and there are thousands to-day on the high road to destruction, because they are being cheated by the " vanities " against which he has warned men. But in the midst of the fleeting world he saw things that were fixed, and not the least of his great visions is this : " Also He hath set eternity in their heart."

Koheleth knew that we must look deeper than the sight of the eyes to see eternal and immortal reality. This is the marvellous thing, that there is something in the heart of man constantly and successfully contradicting the sight of the eyes. For the eyes of man—and no one realised this more intensely than the Preacher—are weary with the sight of the things that fade and die. From the first time they look out upon the world they behold the sad and continuous process of decay. All things are in flux, all things decay, nothing continues. Every voice speaks of mortality. Not only do leaves and flowers wither and fade.

but a more educated eye beholds the stars fade in their orbits. The man that the eye beholds is a mortal creature passing swiftly from the cradle to the grave. For the eye of man mortality is signed and sealed in the dust of the tomb. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: surely the people is grass." What a tremendous witness to immortality must exist in the heart of man, to scorn the partial vision of the eye, and to transfigure its scenes of mortality into the light of immortal hope!

God has set the eternal in the mind of man. It is the essential nature of thought to move out into the boundless, and to overleap all limitations of time and space. This seems to be precisely the meaning of the old Preacher in my text. "Also He hath set eternity in their heart: yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end." The eternal in the mind of man is a movement, not a fulfilment. He cannot comprehend the boundless, and yet he must for ever feel the dynamic of it. He is bound on an endless quest because he is, on the one hand, a finite creature, and because, on the other hand, God has set eternity in his heart.

The mind of man is a free citizen of the boundless past and the boundless future, nor is there any limit set to its marvellous quest in illimitable space. It can never reach the utmost bounds, yet it can never be arrested. The very weft of its being is

woven out of universal and eternal ideas. It returns upon the past, and lights up the avenues of ancient evolutions with the beams of its marvellous light. It moves onwards into the future, and calculates the progress of powers and events to come. It roams through stupendous abysses of created being, and hears the harmonies of mighty stellar systems incredibly distant. It conceives the order of the universe and dreams of the complex unity of the whole of being. The materialistic folly that would make the mind but another name for the brain becomes exceedingly foolish in the view of the endless vistas of mind. Wordsworth looked out on the statue of Newton, and saw him

> "With his prism and silent face,
> Voyaging through strange worlds of thought, alone."

In the freedom and power of thought man is heir to the boundless, and God has set eternity in the heart of man.

God has set eternity in the moral nature of man. This was what the philosopher, Kant, felt when he affirmed that the contemplation of the moral imperative filled him with awe, and with a sense of the sublime like that with which he looked upon the starry heavens. The moral law of which man is conscious, and by which he knows himself bound, belongs to the eternal order of things. In bestowing upon man the stupendous obligation of the moral

consciousness, God has set eternity in his heart. Ill-success has attended the foolish attempt to deduce the majesties of the moral law from an accumulation of temporal experiences. A poor little broken code can be made out of the ingenious manipulation of man's interests and pleasures, and some lingering sentiments may be tortured out of forced theories of evolution. But the simple majesty of the moral imperative and the incomparable sublimity of moral truth bear a stamp which is only known in the heavenly places. The simple explanation is all-sufficing and manifestly true: The Lord proclaimed His law from heaven.

"Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong."

God has set eternity in the spiritual outreaching of man. Man is by nature a worshipping creature. He cannot help stretching forth his hands towards the heavens, and seeking communion with the everlasting invisible Power which is felt to dwell there. He cannot rest in temporal companionship and in the interests of time and place. His spirit summons him to unknown heights and bids him wistfully wait at the gates of eternal glory. When the poet Shelley sought to dethrone and deny God, he was fain to set up in His stead an eternal Power which he called the Spirit of Nature. To this his spirit went pathetically out in earnest longing,

and to this he rendered a homage indistinguishable from worship. God had set eternity in Shelley's heart, and he could not escape from the impulses of worship in his own spirit. The spirit of man, even when encompassed with much darkness of ignorance, must still stand

> "At the world's great altar stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God."

"Also He hath set eternity in their heart."

II. The religious life receives the assurance of immortality in communion with God. "Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die."

We are told that, according to an ancient Jewish tradition, we are to read, not "We shall not die," but "Thou diest not." But this reading is evidently the outcome of a failure to understand Habakkuk's sublime logic of life. In the passage from the premiss, "Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?" to the conclusion, "We shall not die," vital movements, experiences, and activities of the religious spirit are involved. Yet the logic is unerring, and the conclusion is certain.

The religious life is conscious of being in vital possession of God. The "My" and "Mine" take us to mystical deeps of spiritual experience. And they have an answering "My" and "Mine" from the heart and the voice of God. This signifi-

cant relation includes a union of vital fellowship and loving communion, but goes even deeper than this. It involves mutual possession, an attachment of life to life in such a way that each has become a part of the life of the other. God first lays hold of the spirit of the man, and the man in turn lays hold of the life of God, so that each becomes involved with the other. The man cries: "The Lord is my portion"; and God responds: "This shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." In spiritual experience this link is known to be one of eternal life. It is inconceivable that any spirit should perish with whom God has entered into a communion of loving fellowship. For "having loved His own, He must love them even to the end." Love will not let its beloved die, unless love be too weak to keep the loved one alive. And God, the undying, cannot fail to give immortality to His dear ones. Still clearer, if possible, is it that they whose lives have been mystically joined with the life of God can never die. Henceforth He and they are one. Because He lives, they shall live also.

In this union with God, the consciousness of moral perfectibility and of moral glory through God is part of the living logic of immortality. "Art not Thou from everlasting, mine *Holy* One? We shall not die." The holiness of Him who is our life gives assurance that He will not desist from His

work until He has developed in our spirits all their potentialities of holiness. We know in our own experience that it is for holiness He has apprehended us. The fellowship we have with Him is holy fellowship. The impulses we receive from Him are holy impulses. The fruit which comes to us from His life is fruit unto holiness. The purpose of His grace we feel within us is the purpose of holiness. As " mine Holy One," He cannot leave the work of holiness in my life unfinished. He must complete in me all that is possible of moral beauty and strength and glory. Then it is clear that His work of holiness upon my spirit must go on for ever. Not without immortality can He present my marred life without spot or blemish before the glory of His face. And when positive sin troubles me no longer, I know that new potentialities of moral glory will give everlasting work to the brightness of His hand, as I climb nearer and nearer to Him up the stairs of iight. As He leads me here from grace to grace, so will " mine Holy One " lead me yonder from " glory to glory." My Lord and God, mine Holy One, is from everlasting : I shall not die.

III. In Jesus Christ we see the resurrection and the life incarnate. " I am the resurrection and the life."

This is the crowning evidence and demonstration of life and immortality, confirming and completing

the ascending argument represented by the passages we have taken as a text. The lower evidences prepare the way for the reception of the supreme evidence; while, on the other hand, the final evidence in Christ crowns the assurance of experience with the testimony of fact, and with new experiences of a still higher range. The resurrection of Christ is in line with the spiritual man's assurance of immortality, and at the same time gives that assurance a new and unique seal of certainty. It marked a new epoch in the faith in immortality when the Son of Man stood in the midst of men and said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." But did He prove the mighty utterance? Yea, to the last jot and tittle of it. Whatever He touched received life. He touched dead eyes, and they saw. He touched dead ears, and they heard. He touched the fatal disease, and life sprang back into the distempered veins. He touched the dead body on the bier, and it awakened from the sleep of death. He went into the grave Himself, and with resurrection power left it empty on the third day. There is ample evidence of this. If He had failed, we should have been bewildered. For He entered the grave as the declared Champion and Ideal of the religious hope of man, to prove once for all by the shattering of death that the

spiritual hope of men is not a vain dream. That empty grave, forsaken by the dead, but soon tenanted by angels, is the final assurance and certainty of our resurrection life. Spiritual consciousness has been translated into undeniable fact. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of those that sleep."

In Jesus Christ the believer has an enriched spiritual experience, a more intense consciousness of union with the Divine life. The sense of spiritual renewal in Christ is in many ways a new spiritual experience for the world. God has come nearer to men in the Son of Man. Already in union with Christ there is the experience of a spiritual resurrection, which must imply the fuller resurrection of the complete life. For "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new." We already feel the life of Christ coursing even in our mortal body. It is not we that live, but Christ liveth in us. We are conscious of having "risen with Him," and we know that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

What is there to oppose this grand array of evidence for our faith in immortality? Only the poor little limited sight of the eyes. Only the broken perceptions of the physical senses. Are these poor little shadowy things competent to

enter into argument with the great witness of the inner life of man and the glorious record of the Son of God? I trow not. If the faith in immortality be false, then the noblest voices of mind and spirit are false, the grandest lives have been built upon a falsehood, life's noblest and holiest inspirations have been the breath of a lie, and the essential claims of the holy Christ must be rejected. This is unthinkable. The music of the Prince of Life is true. Ring it out to a dying world: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die."

XVIII

THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the dominion of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.—Heb. II. 14, 15.

ONE of the main purposes of this great epistle is to show that Jesus Christ is the consummation of the redemptive self-manifestation of God. This is not the only guiding principle on which the epistle can be profitably studied; its guiding idea may be stated in different ways, or the working out may reveal a number of fundamental ideas. It is a very valuable discipline to go through a book of the Bible in a series of studies, that is, to go through the whole book repeatedly, but each time from the standpoint of a different idea. For example, this epistle might be studied with the mind fixed upon the guiding idea of the priesthood of Christ. It might be re-studied for special instruction in the relation of temporary forms to abiding truths. It might be studied again as instruction in the underlying development and continuity of the life of faith in all generations. It might also be studied

as an illumination upon the self-humiliation of the Son of God. Or, as I said in my first words, it may be studied in the light of the conception that in Jesus Christ God as Redeemer is finally and completely revealed.

It is with this last thought that the epistle begins, not with bated breath, but with boldest and grandest utterance; and this thought remains fundamental in the weft of the epistle until the very end. Jesus is greater than the prophets, not merely greater than the greatest of the prophets, but immeasurably greater than all the prophets put together. The glory of a multiplied multitude of the greatest prophets could not compare with His glory. They, after every multiplication, could give only a fraction of the whole truth of God; but Jesus is the complete revelation of the perfect truth, the full-orbed revelation of the glory of God. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in Him who is Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; the effulgence of His glory, and the impress of His substance." Jesus is similarly greater than all the hosts of angelic spirits. "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten Thee?" The angels are but "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for

the sake of them that shall inherit salvation " ; but of the Son God saith : " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." All the hopes of the old revelation looked onward to the Christ that was to be. All ancient revelation was but a chain of luminous shadows gleaming onward towards His glory. All other systems " have their little day and cease to be," but Jesus Christ is " the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

With such a transcendent conception of the glory of Christ, the author of this epistle finds no difficulty for mind or spirit in His great self-humiliation. It is because He was so high that He had the will and the power to descend so low. He manifests His Divinity most gloriously in the redemptive sufferings of His humanity. The glory of the Son is most wonderfully revealed in the mighty weakness of His redemptive sufferings for men. Having no fear of self-contradiction, this writer describes the disciplinary sufferings of the Redeemer with a daring almost startling even in the pages of inspiration. " Though He was Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and, having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation." " For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Yet

it was because He was " without sin " that He could thus fit Himself through temptation and suffering to become the Author of human redemption. No one could do this but the Son. The Divine glory shone clear in the humiliation and the cross. His becoming man in order to suffer and die was an act of Divine power. To this author His Divinity was as manifest on the cross as on the throne of glory. " Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the dominion of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

I. We have here a striking recognition by the Redeemer of the importance of our physical nature.

The term " flesh and blood " is used in this connection with emphatic reference to the distinctive nature of man. As a specific quality of humanity it is necessarily shared by the Redeemer of humanity. It is elsewhere used to contrast the present life of man with the life of immortality, pre-eminently in the passage: " Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." In that case it opposes the body of glory to this " body of our humiliation." But in the text the opposition is clearly between man and other beings that are not " sharers in flesh and

blood." The nature of " flesh and blood " is recognised as a vital and important feature of human life, so vital and important that the Redeemer of men must share it, in order to become the Author of human redemption. The opposition in the writer's mind is made clear in the next verse: " For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." Whatever may be the precise interpretation of this " taking hold," the old paraphrase: " He took not upon Himself the nature of angels, but that of the seed of Abraham," is certainly latent in the words. His redemptive " grip " fastened itself upon the seed of Abraham, when He was " born of the seed of David according to the flesh." He did not approach the redemption of humanity by descending to angelic estate, by fastening His " grip " upon angels, but by attaching Himself to the seed of Abraham. The commentators have no right to read into the word the exclusive and somewhat rare meaning of " assist."

It is impossible to find a more suggestive and beautiful appreciation of the faculties and experiences of our bodily life. It is a gracious corrective to those who would fling away the body as useless or even as evil, and chant their satire on the " vile body " of the flesh in a sense which Paul would not have understood. So vital and important is our life of flesh and blood that Jesus came to share it with

us, and in and through its specific experiences " was made perfect through sufferings." This body of flesh and blood is not an infliction, a burden to be deprecated, but a gift of God for the enlargement and enrichment of the experiences and powers of our life. It is an added range of disciplinary being. Let me illustrate. Suppose that men normally possessed four senses, and not five, the sense of sight being absent. Then suppose that out of the multitudes of humanity one man became endowed with the faculty of vision. Let him possess this for a year, a month, a day, or even an hour. Let him look out upon the glory of the heavens, the magnificence of the billowy deep, the towering majesty of the mountains, the spreading beauty of the landscape. Let the myriad wonders of the world of sight stream in upon his mind. Then let him be blind again. But he will never more be like the rest of men. What he has seen has become a new part of his being. He has entered into a new range of life. He will carry within him henceforth a world of splendours unknown before.

Or, let us take an illustration suggested immediately by the text and its context. Suppose that out of the angelic host some one angel were to be suddenly invested with a human body and its vital feelings. Let the angel know for a year or a month or a day our life of " flesh and blood." Let him know the pathos and pain, the sorrows and

joys, the throb and the thrill, the passions and powers, of our physical life. Let him feel the warm blood in the veins, the exhilarations and wearinesses, the toil and strain, of our bodily experiences. Then let the "flesh and blood" fall away, and let him return to his former state in the shining ranks. But he will never again become like the rest of the angels. Will he, then, be less than they? Nay, but greater. He will have gathered into his being a new and fruitful range of experiences, which he learned in the new world of "flesh and blood." Powers they cannot share will remain with him, sympathies they cannot understand, joys they cannot know, tender notes of music they cannot sing. When I was a boy, I loved to sing:

> "I want to be an angel,
> And with the angels stand,"

And it was a beautiful childish vision that came with the child's hymn. But now, I do not want to be an angel. I had rather be a man. For it is not of angels that He lays hold, but it is our human "flesh and blood" that He came to share. Ours is a richer heritage, and I want to put some sweetest music into your life of flesh and blood, to make you sacredly proud of the honour and the discipline of it; so that every aching nerve may learn to give out a note of joy. The angels "desire to look into" this wonder of redemption in the world of "flesh

and blood." Its experiences work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Some day we shall "shuffle off this mortal coil," and, when the time comes, we shall be glad to be "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." But in the meantime we are gathering the wealth of our human domain of flesh and blood, and this wealth shall be part of our everlasting inheritance.

Not only do we find in this domain a most fruitful discipline of hope and fear, of pathos and sorrow and pain, but some of our most exquisite delights are wrought through the lowly relations of "flesh and blood." How much would an angel give to know the divine delight of the sweet word, "mother," and to give out the music of it as a human tongue can do! What notes of music are found in the names of mother, father, sister, brother! Yet they all belong to our heritage of "flesh and blood." Who does not know the pure delight of feeling the warm clasp of the hand of friendship, and of seeing the love-light in the eye of a beloved one? There are notes of music wrought out of "flesh and blood," notes that are so divinely sweet, that they can never more be missing from the minstrelsy of our perfect bliss, that our heavenly music cannot be complete without them. Let us, therefore, learn life's lessons well, and thank God for the glories that lie latent in our "flesh and blood."

II. Redemption recognises the organic unity of body and spirit.

He who comes to save the spirits of men reaches out to save their bodies as well. He lays hold, not only of their spirits, but of their " flesh and blood " also. He recognises that man must be saved in the totality of his being, if he is to be saved at all. " Because the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He Himself in like manner partook of the same." This is one of those common-sense things in the Bible that go straight to the heart of vital facts, one of those concrete vitalities that the modern abstractionist cannot understand. There are those that are loftily ready to fling away the corporeal side of man's nature, and discourse vaguely on some abstract " ego " which they generously allow to survive the abolition of concrete humanity. Their talk is as much in the air as their " ego " is. The apostle Paul had more sense than these airy philosophers that dabble in speculative unrealities. " Not that we would be unclothed," he said, " but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life." That there is a spirit in man, we know. But we also know that man is not pure spirit. His nature as man is complex, and body, soul, and spirit must be saved and glorified together.

Our nature of flesh and blood is inseparably intertwined with our moral life. Men cannot be judged

by an absolute moral standard. It has been pithily said that it required less grace to make a saint of John than it required to prevent Peter from knocking a man down. This quaintly expresses the truth we are now presenting. Every Christian minister knows that, if he is rightly to understand the moral character of those with whom he has to do, he must have true knowledge of their flesh and blood. It would be unjust judgment that judged men as if they were abstract "egos" or spirits. The true judge must also lay hold of their "flesh and blood."

Let us call them to the bar of judgment. Here is one man from a godly home. Behind him stretch a holy ancestry, men of God, a genealogy of saints. The blood that has flowed into his veins is as pure as human blood can be. He was nursed on the bosom of a holy mother. He knelt beside a godly father. His home was full of the atmosphere of prayer and praise and the incense of saintly lives. Here is another before us. This is a child of the slums. He came into the world with a manifold taint of sin. Father and mother were defiled. He suckled a shameless breast. He breathed the air of daily impurity. Do you mean to tell me that these two men are to be judged by us by the same absolute rule? I trow not. Think you that God who made us will take no account of flesh and blood? Are we not told: "He knoweth our frame"?

The Christ partook of our flesh and blood in order that He might save us from the utmost stain of sin.

The processes of our spiritual nature vitally affect our flesh and blood. The known power of the mind to affect the body vitally is a shadow of the truth I wish to enforce, but I am moving on a higher and more important plane. The closeness of the union of body and spirit is seen in the fact that moral states and processes visibly affect the physical condition. I simply allude in passing to the bodily paroxysms produced by ungoverned passions, and the evil leer which is transiently painted upon the countenance by the lusting mind. I wish to include these in giving warning of the permanent outrage which an evil mind inflicts upon the physical tenement which God has so wonderfully made. And I also desire to call attention to the beautifying effect of an inward spirit of beauty and purity. Let me put this point categorically: Every evil thought you think makes your body less beautiful; and every pure thought you think makes your body more beautiful. This is a strong statement to make, but it can be proved. Unfortunately, the face on which the evil mind has left its permanent image is only too well known. You see such a man in the vision of your mind. It is the face of a criminal, dark, hideous, satanic. What has wrought this physical ugliness and repulsiveness? Simply a life of sinful thoughts and

deeds. This man was once a beautiful babe in his mother's arms. But sin has worked on him little by little through the years, and now he is marred and disfigured even in his "flesh and blood."

But I have in my mind a picture of another kind. I have seen faces beautified by the soul. Especially among women have I seen this. Women can descend to greater deeps of evil than men, but they can also rise to greater heights of saintliness. I have such a woman in my mind. She was not beautiful according to the world's criteria. She would not have been put in any beauty gallery, and she certainly would not desire to be put there. Yet I have seen her face as it were the face of an angel: refined, sweet, heavenly, all wonderful in spiritual loveliness. What had wrought such beauty as this? Only pure thoughts, holy deeds, sweet and loving words from day to day. These had wrought upon her "flesh and blood," and made it beautiful with the beauty of her pure soul.

You know how stars that have never been seen with the eye even through a telescope have been photographed, and thus proved to exist. When the spot in the heavens was determined where the existence of the star was suspected, a camera attached to a powerful telescope was placed and kept in the line of its rays, so that each minute ray might fall upon the camera. The first minute ray

would not make any visible impression, nor perchance would the millionth ray. But at length by long accumulation an impression is created, and the presence of the star is no longer a matter of conjecture, for its image has come out to view. Clearly even the single ray has made an impression, although invisible, else there could not have been an accumulation at all, and the image could never have been formed. Similarly, it is not possible to see the physical effect of every pure or impure thought. But we can see the results of their accumulation, and therefore know that there is no evil thought that does not make the body less beautiful, and that there is no good thought that does not add beauty to our flesh and blood; although God alone may have the power of seeing each minute change. I venture, therefore, to give you a recipe for beauty of a nobler kind than any of the recipes that are advertised in beauty columns. Think pure thoughts, perform holy deeds, speak loving words. And you shall develop a beauty which the angels will admire, and which God, the Lord of beauty, will look upon with joy. This organic union of spirit and body will be made fully manifest, when spirit and body alike shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father.

III. To redeem man, body and spirit, the Redeemer must conquer death and the grave. "He also in like manner partook of the same; that

through death He might bring to nought him that had the dominion of death, even the devil."

The Saviour conquered death for the body of man, by giving His own body to death, and raising it from the grave. As Man, He conquered death on man's behalf. Man had lost his own original dominion over death, lost it to his fatal foe, the devil. The Son of Man wins back the dominion for humanity, and destroys the dominion of the devil over the grave. It was not physical dissolution that mattered. What mattered was that the devil was in possession of the keys of death. The sting of death is sin. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!

There is a question which has perplexed some. It is this: Since Christ has died on man's behalf, why is it necessary for man also to die even the death of the body? Since He has entered the grave on our behalf, why is it necessary for us to pass through the darkness of the tomb as well? When a question of that kind is asked me, I hasten to answer it by asking another question. That is sometimes the clearest way to give an answer. So I turn to the perplexed brother or sister, and I say in return: Let me ask you a question before I answer yours. It is this: Since Jesus has borne so much sorrow for us, why should we also bear our load of sorrow? Since His heart has ached on our behalf, why should we also have aching

hearts so often ? Since He shed tears on our behalf, why should tears so often be allowed to dim our eyes ? Then I turn to the perplexed one, and ask further : Would you wish to have all your sorrows cancelled, all your tears annulled ? I always know what the answer of a child of God will be to these questions. For the eyes fill with tears of praise to God, and the tongue replies: "Nay, I would not have life without a tear or a cross or a sorrow such as He sends to me. For it is through these I have been learning the deeper secrets of His love. My heartaches have brought Him nearer to me, my sorrows have been turned into holy sympathies, my tears have been as the dews of His grace. Nay, I bless His name that He has allowed me to weep with Him, to suffer with Him, to share the cross with Him. This has been to me the dispensation of His love." Even as such words are spoken, one sees the light of understanding dawning on the countenance, and it becomes easy to speak the word of cheer : " Even as the Saviour allows us the privilege of sharing His sorrows, so He does not wish us to miss the gracious discipline of walking by His side through the darkness of the tomb."

There has been a time when I should have rejoiced to be translated into the life of glory without tasting death, when I should have been glad to share Elijah's journey to heaven in a chariot of fire.

But I think that with riper experience I would now make a loftier choice. Not with boasting, but with lowly gratitude, I think I can say that, if my Lord came to me to-day, and said: "Servant of mine, I give thee thy choice, at the end of thy service, of two paths to the land of glory. If thou willest, thou shalt escape the way of the tomb, and thou shalt pass without the touch of death by an easy by-way into the higher life," I say, I believe I should answer: "Nay, my Lord, even as Thou hast allowed me to tread Thy way in life, so let me follow Thee even to the end of the way. I love the print of Thy feet, and would not miss any of them in life or in death. It has been sweet to traverse many a dark and lonely way with Thee, and to mingle my tears with Thine. Out of this companionship Thou hast created the precious things of my spirit. Let me not miss the last great experience by which Thou didst pass to the portals of life. Let me walk with Thee all the way. Let me feel Thee in the last great shadow. When all is dark around me, let me feel my hand in Thine, and know the blessedness of singing in the starless hour: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For Thou art with me.' There, dear Master, shalt Thou teach me the final lesson of love, and fashion the crowning jewel for my glorified spirit."

Browning's strong words in "Prospice" so mag-

nificently express the thought with which I am closing, that I unreluctantly yield to the temptation to let them ring out as the last words of this discourse :

"Fear death ! . . . To feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face !
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe,
Where he stands, the arch-fear in a visible form.
Yet the strong man must go ;
For the journey is done, and the summit's attained,
And the barriers fall ;
Yet a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter ; so one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that Death bandaged my eyes, and forebore,
And bade me creep past.
Nay, let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast :
O thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again,
And—with God be the rest !"

XIX

THE RESURRECTION BODY OF THE BELIEVER

But some one will say, How are the dead raised? And with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own.—1 Cor. xv. 35–38.

THE Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead in corporeal form has met with opposition from different and even contrary quarters. Perhaps the blame for the opposition has not always and altogether rested with the antagonist, for some forms of opposition have been excited, not so much by the essential doctrine itself, as by certain favourite and persistent forms of its presentation. The scientific objection to the doctrine is familiar to all, and it does not seem justifiable to take the refuge which has so often been taken from it in the absolute omnipotence of God. For the workings of God in redemption can scarcely contradict the manifest facts of His operations in the natural world. The apostle takes

a far sounder view in regarding these operations as analogical and mutually illustrative. But I am anticipating a little. Science has pointed to the obvious fact that the body returns to the dust, and is redistributed again and again into participation with new forms of life, so that its resurrection in association with one persistent individual life is impossible on any rational conception of existence. It is not merely that the dust has been dispersed, but it has been appropriated by other beings, including human beings, so that individual ownership has been terminated for the human spirit that once tenanted the body. The body that has been laid in the grave is vitally claimed by the aggressive energies of life that remain on the earth, and their claim is made good by complete appropriation. The force of this argument has been so far acknowledged by theologians, that they have surrendered the material of the body as a whole, but reserved some mysterious germ which no other life can appropriate, and out of which the resurrection-body shall at last grow and spring from the dust. The serious flaw in this position is, that it is an effort of pure speculation, without any manifest support in the word of God. It may have been suggested by the seed argument of the apostle Paul, but can gain no support from a careful study of that argument.

A more subtle opposition to the resurrection,

yet not without debt of impulsion to the previous argument, is found at the present time in the tendency to spiritualise away all the concrete facts of the Christian faith. It is a great thing to realise the pre-eminent glory of spiritual forces and facts. But it is a mischievous thing to seek to eliminate the concrete facts and forces through which spiritual powers operate and by which they are inspired and stimulated. When the Incarnation of the Son of God is etherealised into a "beautiful fiction," when the wonder-working power of the Christ is attenuated into an imaginative allegory of spiritual healing, when the Atonement of the cross is explained away as an ingenious parable of Divine love, when the reported resurrection of the body of Jesus from the tomb is said to be but a vivid idea of spiritual survival, when the ascension of Christ and His second coming are also relegated to the realm of parabolic fiction, then spiritual energies and truths are not glorified or assisted, but are shorn of the vital complement which they need for their highest inspiration and development. It was not in the realm of subjective ideas that Paul found his mighty moral and spiritual inspirations, but in the concrete facts of the redemptive work of the Son of Man. The centre of his message was the crucified and risen Christ. The love that constrained him was the love recorded in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

" I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live : and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me. And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." The corporeal resurrection of the saints is embedded in the concrete glories of the work of redemption in Christ.

The noble completeness of the Christian message concerning life and resurrection is clearly brought out in this magnificent chapter. Man is glorified in the totality of his being, body, soul, and spirit. There is no question of any part being missing or defective. The sceptic has inquired, " With what manner of body do they come ? " and Paul at once accepts the challenge. They certainly must come with a body. The Redeemer will leave no part of human life unredeemed. Let us endeavour to see whither the apostle leads us as he develops his great argument, and shows " with what manner of body " the dead shall rise.

I. Let us first consider Paul's general conception of the resurrection of the dead.

This chapter is concerned only with the resurrection of the believer, so that we shall not touch in this discourse on the resurrection of the ungodly, which, I may say by the way, is a much more difficult problem. It is to be clearly noted, as the

first element in the right understanding of the New Testament concerning the resurrection, that its inspired writers do not write of the resurrection of the body as a separate element, but always of the "resurrection of the dead." In the opening of Paul's famous argument the question is not, "How are the dead bodies raised?" but "How are the dead (i.e. the dead saints) raised? and with what body do they (i.e. the saints) come?" It is true that the words of verses forty-two to forty-four in this chapter have been very generally represented as affirming the separate resurrection of the body, the "sowing" being taken to mean the laying of the body in the tomb, and therefore the "raising" to mean the resurrection of that particular and individual body. But neither the terms of that passage nor the general argument of the apostle will bear such an interpretation. The dead body that is returned to the dust may be appropriately said to be "in corruption"; scarcely, however, "in dishonour"; less still "in weakness"; and certainly not a "psychical body." For it ceases to be a "psychical body" the moment life is extinct. But when we interpret the words as a contrast between the living body of our earthly life and the future body of glory, all the terms become just and suggestive. It is the living seed that is "sown," not a dead seed. The sowing of the body is the sowing of it into our present life. As

the body of the sown seed dies, so our bodies die. As out of sowing and death, the seed develops a new and appropriate body, so also is the "resurrection of the dead." Our present bodies are sown "in corruption," for they belong to corruptible elements. They are sown in comparative "dishonour." They are clearly sown "in weakness." And their specific character is that of a "psychical body." This contrast is more briefly stated in the words: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," where the apostle is obviously speaking of the living body of the flesh in contrast with the incorruptible body of glory.

The great utterance of Jesus in John v. 28 does not contradict this view, but confirms it for the careful interpreter: "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment." Here, as elsewhere, it is the dead in the totality of their being that "shall come forth." The phrase "all that are in the tombs" cannot mean simply the dead bodies, so that we have here merely a phrase for the world of the dead. For, of course, the dead do not literally dwell in the tombs. The dead "shall come forth" not incorporeally; yet the consistent picture of the

New Testament is not that of the resurrection of "dead bodies," but the resurrection of the dead saints coming forth in the brightness of corporeal glory.

It is, of course, abundantly clear that the New Testament does not teach a bodiless resurrection. It yields to none in its anticipation of spiritual glories yet to be revealed. Partial knowledge will vanish, and the full beam of heavenly knowledge will take its place. The shadowy vision of earth will be glorified in the new light when we shall see Him "face to face." Moral defects shall be cleansed away, and we shall be presented without spot or blemish or wrinkle or any such thing in the presence of His glory. The spirit shall know in forms and powers undreamed the beatific energies of eternal life. But in the midst of all these spiritual splendours, life's lowlier ranges are not forgotten or lost. Nothing shall be lost, but all gathered up into new life and power and glory. Their vision is dim who cannot see the beauty of this redemptive preservation and glorification of the human body. There is some peculiar charm, as if from some new homeland of the soul, in the music of the words: "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."

The dead are to be raised up from the unseen world to appear with Christ in glory. That is the fundamental fact of the resurrection. All those who have fallen asleep in Christ "will God bring with Him." They will come forth out of the mystery of the unseen, and be manifested to the world. They will come with circumstance of glory, a glory caught from the glory of His "appearing." They will come in bodies of immortal glory, thus completely redeemed from death and the grave. Such is the general conception of the New Testament respecting the resurrection of "the dead."

II. Let us consider Paul's exposition of the manner of body with which the dead shall rise.

Paul finds his conception mirrored in the history and process of the "bare grain," which is cast into the ground, which passes through the state of death, and then appears in the fullness of life with the new body which God has given "even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own": that is, the kind of body is determined by the kind of life which the seed contained. If this analogy be simply followed without any straining, the conception which it gives us of the new body of the resurrection is clear enough. Our earthly life is the seed which is sown here in view of the harvest of the life to come. As the body of the seed dies in the ground, so this mortal body must die and

return to earth. But as the life of the seed works beneath the decaying body and develops after the death of the body a new corporeal tenement in accordance with the laws of its own energy, so the life of the believer is invested with its higher corporeality when the corruptible body falls away, and afterwards develops this "body of glory" to the full capacity of its enriched and exalted nature. To this conception science can offer no objection. In fine, Paul finds the science of it in any ordinary field where "the sower goes forth to sow."

Is there anything in the other writings of Paul, or in any other part of the New Testament, to conflict with this interpretation or with this conception? I do not know of anything. But I know of much to confirm it, when once the conception has been clearly grasped. I venture to say that the striking teaching of Paul in the fourth and fifth chapters of second Corinthians will bear restudy in the light of this conception. I will not insist at present upon the suggestive antithesis between the "outward man" and the "inward man" in the words: "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day." Yet the natural suggestion is, that since the "outward man" admittedly refers to the natural body, the "inward man" should refer to the spiritual body as already latent in the spiritual

life. But the opening verses of the fifth chapter shine perspicuously in the light of this conception, while otherwise they simply tempt the extreme ingenuity of the commentators. Let me give the passage simply, with one or two necessary emendations in the translation: "For we know that, if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven; for of a truth we shall be clothed, and shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Now He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

There is no warrant in the words I have quoted for projecting the present confidence, "We *have* a building of God," to some distant resurrection long after death. Then how definite is the assurance: "For of a truth we shall be clothed, and shall not be found naked"! It requires a considerable strain to make this refer to living until the parousia. The apostle nowhere represents falling asleep before the parousia as a calamity to be deprecated with groanings. Even in the same chapter he says: "We are willing rather to be away from home

from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." The apostle's confidence that the believer shall " not be found naked " is absolute. " Not to be unclothed, but " clothed upon " is the " very thing" for which God " has wrought us," and given to us " the earnest of the Spirit." Whether living until the parousia, or falling asleep in Christ, the confidence in this matter is precisely the same. The spiritual and the corporeal triumph go together. The " groaning " which the Spirit has laid upon us is not a groaning for " naked " release, but a groaning for the complete redemption of spirit and body. The triumphant spiritual consciousness cannot brook the humiliation of " nakedness " even for an hour. And this consciousness is the " earnest of the Spirit," the " very thing " for which God has wrought us. " Of course, then, we shall be clothed, and shall not be found naked." " If this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we *have* a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."

Throughout the New Testament the outlook for the resurrection of the saints is always towards heaven, not towards the earth and the grave. They rise with the coming of Christ, and stand forth with Him in glory before the living are transformed. They have been hidden away in the unseen world of the dead, and it is out of this they " rise," or are made to " reappear " before the living. Thus Paul

writes to the Thessalonians: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." The meaning of this has already been given in the prefatory words: "Them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring *with Him*." Yet the "resurrection" is not merely spiritual, but includes the corporeal nature raised to a condition of glory. The dead are raised in bodily glory, and the living are corporeally transformed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. This is the complete victory over death and the grave. "For when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

The relation between the condition of the holy dead immediately after death and that of the saints of the final resurrection, completely transformed into the likeness of the "body of His glory," is like the relation of the dawn to the perfect day. They, like ourselves, are looking forward to His appearing for the perfect crown of life. Neither spiritually nor corporeally can they shine forth in their perfect glory until He comes again. "They without us cannot be made perfect." Free from sin they doubtless are, and to be "away from home from the body and at home with the Lord" is blessedness

untold. But they have not yet seen the fullness of glory which is to be manifested in Him. But when He is manifested, then they that are " with Christ " will catch the first rays of His glory, and they shall " rise " from the lesser light into the brightness of His manifestation, and appear with Him in the heavenly places. Then spirit and body shall shine with resurrection splendour. When He is manifested, both they and we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

III. Let us consider the importance of this message of corporeal resurrection and glory for our Christian faith and hope.

It gives the greatest definiteness and vividness to the hope which looks beyond death. A clear and inspiring hope must move along lines of continuity and vivid identity. Spirit and soul and body, according well, must " make one music as before, but vaster." The conception of a condition of bodiless spirituality would so completely destroy continuity of being that hope would be lost in unknown abysses. The soul could only dream vaguely of some " boundless deep," but could have no vision of seeing the " Pilot face to face." But the assurance of resurrection into a corporeal life of glory gives hope just that continuity and development of being in which it finds its fullest joy. A clear and inspiring hope must sing: " Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed

upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

This message gives our hope of glory a richer and sweeter human colouring. We may talk as grandiloquently as we will about persisting "egos," and a spiritual resurrection or survival; but we men and women are not constituted that way. Our affections and our confidences gather around corporeal life. We cannot conceive what our lives would be like if they were no longer intertwined with vital corporeality. But we may be sure that they would become so essentially different that they would no longer be human in the old familiar and gracious sense. We do not want to lose anything that is essentially characteristic of our humanity. We want the sweet human touch upon our life for all eternity. It is this gracious human touch that makes it possible to think of heaven as our home. Paul, assured that he would not be found naked, touched the sweet human chord of home in the words: "Away from home from the body, at home with the Lord." It is this sweet human note we find in the words of Jesus: "In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." It is this sweet human element that spreads joy-mists before our eyes when we

sing of our heavenly home in strains like this:

> "Where the child has found its mother,
> Where the mother finds her child,
> Where the families are gathered,
> That were scattered on the wild."

This message gives us the strongest grip on the concrete facts of redemption. It saves our faith from running away into vagueness. It gives importance to the working out of redemption in human history, and solemn reality to the Incarnation of the Son of God as the foundation of our hope of eternal life. It brings us into vital and eternal relation to the wonderful birth in the manger, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. It links us not vaguely to the Atonement offered upon the cross, when He bore our sins "in His own body" on the tree. It gives us a vital and eternal interest in the empty grave from which the Son of Man had risen, vanquishing death with body as well as spirit. It gives us a vital interest in His ascension into heaven, when He ascended in bodily form to enter into His glory. It gives us an exultant relation to the time of His return, when He shall come again in like manner as His disciples saw Him go into heaven. He is not vague and elusive to us, for we know our kinship, our concrete human kinship, with His real humanity in the days of His flesh, and with His "body of

glory" in the day of His appearing. We touch Him with reverent hands. We share His glory. We cry, "My Lord and my God."

> "And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought."

It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. This is the eternal music of humanity.

XX

THE ABIDING GLORIES OF LIFE

For now we see in a mirror, obscurely; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I fully know even as also I have been fully known. Now, therefore, abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and greater among these is love.—1 Cor. xiii. 12, 13.

THE modern tendency to an analysis which divides the writers of the New Testament into spiritual compartments must be received with great caution. It is a serviceable thing to note the special characteristics of those who gave to us the oracles of God, and to study their writings in the light of cardinal conceptions. But such analytical methods are provisional, and should be supplemented by candid and reverent synthesis. For no writer has a monopoly of any essential element in the message of salvation, even though the perspective of each may stretch in a somewhat different form. Peter has been labelled the apostle of hope; yet the inseparable voice of faith and hope and love form a continuous chord in his epistle. James has been designated the apostle of works; yet it is he who has most strongly urged the effectual working of the prayer of faith. John has been called the apostle of love; yet it is he

who writes: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." And, "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." Paul has been marked off as the apostle of faith; yet nowhere in the New Testament has love been set to such beautiful music, to such "linkèd sweetness long drawn out," as in the thirteenth chapter of this epistle; and in our text this apostle of faith places the crown of supremacy on the brow of love. The apostles did not work in compartmental cells, but each stood under the same wide heaven of holy vision; seeing the same glories, although with different eyes.

The sudden burst into this rapturous poem on love is just like the manner of Paul. In marking out fences, and settling small matters of disputed boundaries on the earth, he never loses the guidance and inspiration of the over-arching heavens. Like Wordsworth's skylark, he is "true to the kindred points of heaven and home." Details of duty never become tedious with him, because he straightway baptises them in everlasting glories. If men are troubled about many subsidiary things, he lifts them as by holy magic into a loftier plane of vision, and bids them share the inspirations of Diviner ideas and a richer life. In the twelfth chapter Paul has been assessing the values of certain "gifts" with all the precision of an accountant in an office; for the apostle had a genius for

arrangement, assessments, and administration. His higher vision never permitted him to be slipshod with the practical valuation and direction of Church or personal matters. And of all the unruly and unpromising things with which even an apostle could deal, surely there was nothing more unruly or unpromising than pride in the gift of "tongues." Too much in the way of tongues often means too little in the way of love. Yet it is out of this unpromising ground that the apostle suddenly rises into the music of holy rapture, and his song of love seems to fall upon our ears like the notes of a seraph from the upper skies.

It is also characteristic of this apostle to give us suggestions of revelation that are dim with excess of light, and allure us as with the charm of romance to further investigation. Even a startling word or phrase will seem to open new vistas of light and hope, new unfoldings of the purpose of the love of God. He either knows of mysteries of glory of which he only gives luminous suggestions, or else he himself catches visions of which he only understands the flashing outlines. Such a suggestion is contained in the words: "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver the kingdom up to God, even the Father." What mysteries of redemptive glory lie behind those words! And in our text the apostle makes a great abrupt statement, containing pregnant suggestions so novel and

far-reaching and wonderful that the commentators have had a great time in trying to strain and twist it so as to get it into the ordinary mould of their conceptions. The contrast between the imperfect and the perfect life can be taken on known lines, although the manner of Paul's statement of it is very striking. But the sudden assertion that faith and hope, as well as love, have everlasting duration is a startling challenge to the conventional view of the nature of faith and hope, and has greatly tested the ingenuity of commentators who are afraid to take the apostle at his word. One is not surprised at this, for the apostle's words are sometimes very startling and revolutionary. Yet, when we do take him simply, and are able to appropriate the suggestion that faith and hope and love, all three, are the abiding glories of the spiritual life, we find that he has flung a new and happy illumination upon the grand perspective of the life to come.

I. Paul saw in the life to come perfection as contrasted with the imperfection of the present life.

He saw in the life to come the perfection of revelation. Now the revelation of truth comes to us only as in a mirror, obscurely; but then it will come to us like a clear face into which we directly and closely look: "face to face." There are two distinct figures in the text to indicate the obscurity of the revelation of truth which we receive in the present life. The one represents it as appearing

to us like the obscure and uncertain image of the ancient mirror, not like the image given by our clear and accurate modern mirrors of glass, but like that much more imperfect reflection given through transparent horn, or some such substance, in the old days. This image was both uncertain in its form and obscure in its presentation. The other figure compares our present revelation of truth to an enigma, or riddle, in which the truth is partly revealed and partly hidden. Truth comes to us with veiled face, and we have to peer diligently, if perchance we may catch glimpses of the lineaments beneath the veil. Truth flashes upon us only some of her meanings. The rest are hidden from us for a while. She teaches us in parables, and not in plain and full utterance. Gleams reach us from her "enigma," but she has many secrets undisclosed.

In contrast with this, the apostle teaches that a complete revelation of truth will be given when Christ has come to invest His people with their resurrection glory. For we must remember that the "completeness" of things does not arrive, according to the teaching of the New Testament, until the "parousia," or the final manifestation of the Lord from heaven. Blessedness ensues immediately upon the death of those that "die in the Lord," but not completeness. Even in the hour of death, the Apostle Paul looked forward to his Lord's appearing for the great consummation

of his glory and joy. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all those that love His appearing." The apostle does not mean that all the universe of possible truth will be at once revealed to the saints in the day of the glory of Christ, so that no new revelation of truth can ever be made to them any more. He is thinking of the full light of the revelation of redemption as compared with our present fragmentary knowledge. It is the temporary "enigma" that is to disappear in the clear utterance of truth. It is the obscure mirror that is to be put aside in the presence of His glory. The clouds will fade away from the sun of the Divine revelation, and its light will fall upon us in celestial clearness. What a revelation it will be when we see the meaning of the cross no longer in an obscure mirror, or in a veiled enigma, but "face to face"!

Correspondent with this perfection of revelation will appear perfection of knowing. For a perfect revelation were of no service unless there were a corresponding development in the capacity of knowledge. It were useless to let the whole light of the truth of God blaze upon us at present, for our power of knowing could not cope with it, and we should be only bewildered by its transcendent

splendours. The veiling of the revelation is a beneficent concession to our imperfect powers of knowledge. "Now I know in part; but then shall I fully know even as also I have been fully known." The implicit object and subject in the last words of this sentence is, of course, Jesus Christ, who is the beginning and the end of all things to the apostle. It was unnecessary to add the great name, for there was no other. What the apostle expects in the presence of his Lord is perfect spiritual clearness of vision and knowledge. He will look upon his Lord with the same spiritually clear vision with which his Lord looked upon him. The light in his own spirit will be unshadowed, so that he will clearly and rightly comprehend the light of truth which shall fall upon him from the face of his Lord. Fullness of knowledge does not mean finality. For the full life may go on growing into greater life, and still be full for ever.

The sum and source of this hope is the expectation of perfect fellowship with Christ in glory. The full revelation cannot come while we are sundered from Him by the shadows of sense. The full power of knowing cannot be received while His glory falls upon us in obscure lines. This is the fragmentary state, the seeing in a mirror, in an enigma, and the knowing in part. But this fragmentary state necessarily vanishes when we see Him "face to face." Then we "shall fully know Him, even as also we have been fully known by Him."

II. Paul saw in the life to come faith, hope, and love, as the abiding glories of the spiritual life.

This suggestive conception of the everlastingness of faith and hope in conjunction with love has caused great perplexity to many commentators. Some have explained it as meaning that faith and hope will remain until the parousia, and that love will then continue beyond them for ever. With a further bound, they have declared that Paul meant to indicate this difference in the term of their abiding in his affirmation that love was greater than the other two; because, they affirm, it is in this everlasting abidingness that love excels. But all this is affirmation, and not exegesis. If Paul meant to say that love was greater than faith and hope, because it abides for ever, and they do not, he certainly adopted a very extraordinary method of announcing his thought. It is not characteristic of him to begin by saying the very opposite of what he wishes his readers to understand. He has been writing of things that are in their nature terminable, because they belong to the period of our earthly probation. None of these things were necessarily terminable before the parousia, but they would come to an end in the glory of the life to come. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we

prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." At the end of this contrast, which is continued into our text, the apostle sums up the manifest antithesis in the words: "Now, therefore, abides faith, hope, love, these three." Far from making an essential difference in duration between them he links them emphatically together as three abiding forces which will remain together when the temporary gifts and powers of the Church are dissolved in the greater glory of the new life. These are the abiding glories of the spiritual life. Yet, while all abide, love is the queen of these three deathless Christian graces.

Although this interpretation is to my mind as obvious as any interpretation of plain words can be, yet I am glad to have the emphatic support of such an exegetical giant as Heinrich Meyer. He exegetically translates: "And thus continue (unto the everlasting life and onward in it) faith, hope, love." He further says: "Faith remains, even in the world to come, the abiding grip upon blessedness: what keeps the glorified in continued possession of salvation is their abiding trust in the Atonement which took place through the death of Christ. The everlasting fellowship with Christ in the future age is not conceivable at all without the everlasting continuance of the living ground and bond of this fellowship, which is none other than

faith." Concerning hope the same great exegete says: "Hope, equally in its established sense: Hope of the everlasting glory. This abides for the glorified, with regard to the everlasting duration and continued development of their glory. How Paul conceived this continued development and that of the Messianic kingdom to proceed in detail, cannot indeed be proved. But the idea is not on that account unbiblical, and is necessarily presupposed by the continuance of hope, which is undoubtedly asserted in our text. Moreover, in chapter xv. verse 24, steps in the development of the future 'kingdom' are manifestly given, as indeed the everlasting 'glory' generally, according to its essential character as 'life,' is not conceivable at all without development to ever higher perfection for the individual, and therefore also is not conceivable without the continuance of hope."

I have quoted these words at length, because they are so penetrative and suggestive. The relation of faith to the Redeemer must abide for ever. Faith is not one of the temporary instruments of the soul, but a vital function of the spiritual life. Yet in passing onward into the higher life, faith itself must enter into a higher phase of glory. Here it is faith groping in the darkness; there it will be faith glorified by sight. Now we walk by faith, without sight; then we shall walk by faith perfected by glad visions of the spirit. Now faith is

disciplined by the darkness of earth; then faith will be perfected by the glory of heaven. Now faith is often troubled and shaken by the shadows of the world; then faith will be for ever tranquil and untroubled in the unshadowed world of immediate vision. To deny the continuance of faith in heaven is to deny the power of trust to the child that looks up with joy into its mother's face, and to allow it only to the child that is troubled by its mother's absence. No doubt faith has a very special use in the absence of the loved one, to make up as well as may be for the want of the sight of the beloved's face; but the perfection of trust is not to be sought in the troubled confidence of the child whose mother is absent, but in the perfect peace of the child that lies safely folded on the mother's breast. So shall our faith be glorified. Then shall we know perfect trust, with its holy sense of rest, when, like the beloved John, yet in a higher world, we "lean our head upon the Saviour's breast." "And so faith abideth."

The assertion that hope is an everlasting function of the spiritual life is still more striking, to some it may appear even startling. And it unquestionably opens up thoughts and hopes concerning the life to come which deal hard and delightful blows at conventional religious ideas of the world of glory. Christian men and women cannot in their heart of hearts have accepted the conventional picture of a moveless heaven, else they would never have been

charmed with the prospect. For our conventional heaven is just a static panorama without any real movement of life. The performers are perfected puppets that must act just so again and again, without any development or initiative of real life, for all eternity. We keep all the splendid dynamic of life for the earth, and leave heaven only the eternal continuance of a static scene. The aggressive energies of life belong only to this world; and in the next world the touch of glory is supposed to change all life into stagnation. This incredible view of things Paul breaks down with the illuminative words: "And so hope abides."

The shadowed hope of earth becomes a glorified hope in heaven. By so much is the dynamic of the heavenly life greater than the dynamic of the life of earth. If I were offered a heaven in which hope had no place, I should choose the life of earth with all its toil and shadow, for the sake of the hope that still remains, even if heaven were stored from end to end with harps and songs and jewelled light. If hope were extinct, life would be only a gilded prison, even in heaven. But heaven is life, fullness of life, and true life is an energy that has no stagnation and no resting-place, but must move higher and higher into new planes of experience and power. This eternal abiding of the glorious outlook of hope is not inconsistent with that fullness or completeness of life which the saints will receive

at the appearing of their Lord. Paul's analogy of the passage from childhood to manhood will make this plain. The hope of the child is directed towards its coming attainment of manhood. The attainment of full manhood is the fullness or completeness of the life of man. In this attainment the partial life of the child has passed away, and manhood as such is complete. But this is not the end of hope or of progress. The mature man casts his eyes onward towards new goals of hope, and proceeds to seek new developments of power through the energies of his completed manhood. This is a necessity of life; and the fuller and stronger the life, the greater will be the visions of hope and the energies of development. So also is it with the complete sainthood of the saints. The imperfect conditions of the present life will have passed away, and the glorified saints will have reached the fullness of their sainthood in Christ. But that is the beginning of a mightier dynamic of life, and therefore the beginning of new perspectives of development and celestial hope. Pope's well-known lines:

> "Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
> Man never is, but always to be, blest,"

need only an obvious re-casting to show the function of hope in the heavenly world:

> "Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
> To greater blessedness aspire the blest."

But what can be the objects towards which hope sets its face in the world of perfect blessedness? This question, of course, cannot be answered in detail, but the general principle of hope and development in the world of spiritual life and power is not difficult to conceive. We know that the blessed dead are at present looking forward, with their hope upon the coming of the Lord in glory, even as our hope is upon Him. Their path, like ours, is like the shining light, brightening unto the perfect day. Their full crown of glory is in His hand. But there are illuminative hints in the sacred word of further developments of glory in the kingdom of the Redeemer, especially in 1 Corinthians xv. 24, where an "end" is indicated in some distant mystery of light and dominion. But, apart from all this, surely the world of glory is no *cul de sac*, but a world in which the might and splendour of life shall have everlasting opportunities for achievement, and in which power and glory shall grow in the greatness of continuous service. We are bound for no stagnant world, but for a world in which life is filled with noblest purpose, and in which hope is glorified. Imagination fails before such a picture of endless hope and progress in heavenly places. O what must it be to be there!

We know that love must abide, for love is life. Yet, knowing this, we ought also to know that faith and hope must abide along with it. For there

can be no spiritual life without union to the Christ of God by faith, and there can be no true love except that which the hand of faith draws from the life of God. And where the life of love is, there can be no stagnation, but glory shall be made ever more glorious, and blessedness ever more blessed. For love is the supreme dynamic of life, and so carries hope on its bosom for ever. And so abides faith, hope, love.

"Greater among these is love." They are all beautiful, wonderful, and eternal; but love is queen. They must last as long as love, for they are dowered with immortality; but love must ever be pre-eminent. Without love, faith is a dead leaf. Without love, hope is a chasing of shadows. But love is self-sufficient, and faith and hope awake at her call. Faith is but a means to love, and hope is born from the bosom of love, glad to return again to nourish the beauty of love with its assured visions. Faith and hope are princes of the life; love is the monarch of the inner throne. Faith and hope are tributary currents; love is the full river of life that flows through the kingdom of the spirit. In all these things, the greatest of these is love.

But most of all is its pre-eminence seen in this, that love is a Divine quality; and not only so, but it is the supreme Divine quality. Faith and hope belong only to man, or only to man and other finite beings; but the supreme virtue of love man

shares with God. In love, therefore, man draws nearest to God. In love his life has fullest understanding of God. In love, man becomes most like God. In love, man touches the deepest powers of Divine truth and life. To know God is life eternal; and the God who offers Himself for human knowledge is love. Love is the heart of the great redemption. Jesus Christ is essentially the manifestation of love. The cross is the supreme dynamic for the creation of holy life, and the cross is the manifestation of love. Love is the secret of eternal blessedness: for God is love.

This picture of a world of love includes all the rest, and adds its own pre-eminent beauty. What a world it shall be when love puts on her garments of glory, when the cross shall have completely conquered, and we shall have learned to love even as He has loved us! There will be no tears to wipe away, and no aching hearts to comfort. But in the vast possibilities of service in God's great new world, what may not glorified love do to raise the music higher, and spread new splendours through the world of light? How the joy-bells of the heart ring out at the prospect! Let faith and hope and love grow within us, that they may have glory in His presence, and that love may lead her handmaidens in heaven's endless way of blessedness, a pathway of life without end. And so abideth faith, hope, love: these three; and greater among these is love.

XXI

THE TRIUMPH OF THE KING

For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet.—1 Cor. xv. 25.

FOR logic on fire with poetry, and poetry flashing through orbits of logic, it would be difficult even for Paul himself to surpass this chapter. If Paul had written this message in the form of a psalm, he would certainly have introduced a "selah" after our text, giving instruction for a great crescendo of the orchestra, for a great triumphant burst of loudest music. He would have been tempted to do it at more than one preceding point in the chapter. It would have been difficult to omit it after the cry: "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep." The temptation might have been still greater to call for the great musical swell after the sweeping vision: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." But at the close of the triumphant music of our text, the demand for the loud-sounding strings would have been irresistible.

It is to be noted that it was in the central themes

of the Gospel that Paul found both the highest reason and the sublimest poetry. For the deepest reason and the highest poetry meet in the centre of being in everlasting wedlock. Truth in the deep heart of it is beauty, and beauty is truth. When we get deep enough into the truth of Nature, we find that truth translated into the music of the spheres. The vision of truth in the land of pure light creates a multitude of singers with harps of gold. The highest expression of truth is the poetry of God's love. No wonder, then, that when Paul dealt with the truth of God in Jesus Christ, he was for ever breaking into poetry and song. One of the strangest things in these confused days is, that so many fail to find either reason or poetry in the cardinal truths of the Gospel. They criticise these truths as a blind man might criticise the glory of the skies. They lightly fling aside as irrational the message of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection. And then, of course, they find no beauty in them that they should desire them. For the thing that contradicts true reason is essentially unbeautiful. On the other hand, we can safely affirm that the sublimest thing is the divinest and the truest thing. The teaching that opens gates of glory, and sets the soul on fire with celestial music, is the teaching that has received the highest impress of truth. We are yet waiting for the new evangel that can " break forth into singing " after

the fashion of this chapter, or the eighth of the Epistle to the Romans, or any other of the great sections in which Paul expounds the divinely revealed doctrines of the cross.

As in all great movements of truth and music and poetry, you need to follow this chapter line by line, in order to get aright into the majestic swing of the music of the text. Most great movements begin quietly, with conscious power to move onward and upward through progressive glories to the final climax of triumphant splendour. So does the movement of this chapter. First of all, we find the quiet but confident statement of the self-manifestations of the risen Christ, reaching an exquisite note in the words: "And last of all, as unto one untimely born, He appeared to me also." Then the tide rises, and we follow the splendid argument for the Resurrection on the ground of the glorious contents of the faith of the believer. We are made to see the sublime power and lofty sanctions of this faith, how impossible it is to deny its Divine fullness and splendour; and yet are compelled to admit that it derives its validity and glory through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Still on the rising tide of argument and poetry, we are borne along on the triumphant parallel between Adam and Christ. The power of the risen Man is necessary to overcome the death introduced by the fallen man. And a new ever-living humanity rises

to our view with the risen Christ as its life-centre. Still the tide rises, and we are presented with a dazzling anticipation of the far-off consummation of the kingdom of God through the resurrection power of the reigning Christ: "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." Then all the billows of joy are summoned for the mighty burst of music: "For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet." The challenge is on our lips. Let a chapter of any "other gospel" be written to compete with the glory, the music, and the poetry of this!

The consideration of two or three questions will enable us to show that this sublime poetry is certain truth.

I. In what manner and by what means does Jesus reign?

Jesus reigns by means of His unique message to men. It is a common saying that ideas rule the world, and it is certainly true that they play a great part in its dominion. It is also certain that the greatest and sublimest ideas have supreme rule, because they are certain to be associated with the greatest facts and the mightiest forces. We need not hesitate to declare that the greatest and sublimest ideas given to men are those that belong to the message of Jesus Christ.

Consider the unique greatness and sublimity of the message of Divine Atonement for sin. Except in the case of some insensate babblers, even those who refuse to believe in this great message do so because it is too transcendent and too marvellous to be credible. It is beyond possibility, they say, that the Son of God, one in essence and glory with the Father, should come into the life of men to offer Himself as a sacrifice for human sin. Such a conception is too high and too wonderful for them; they cannot attain to it. Yet, in affirming this, they are unconsciously doing homage to that unique sublimity which is the seal of divinest truth. Truly, "great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifest in the flesh." What message outside of the Gospel can compare with it in beauty and sublimity and passing wonderfulness? It goes down to the deepest roots of human sin, and traverses the inner chambers of Divine love. It finds its way into the guilty conscience, and sheds there the light of a pardon and a peace that passes understanding. Its light falls in perfect beauty on the mercy-seat, and it gives love its satisfying vision of God. Understanding may fail to reach all its secret of wisdom and holiness and grace, for it is higher than heaven and deeper than hell; but the penitent sinner knows no music so sweet, and no power so mighty, as the message of the atoning Christ: "Behold the Lamb

of God, which beareth away the sin of the world."

Consider the greatness and sublimity of Christ's message of the immanence of God. This will appear all the more wonderful when it is contrasted with some feeble modern attempts to supersede it with nebulous philosophical ideas. These mingle God and man together in a pantheistic maze in which sin and goodness are hopelessly confused, because God and man are hopelessly confused. In the end we are left with a vague Deity whom we cannot disentangle from the confusions of human life, and whom we lose more effectually by seeking to discover Him in our own hearts than by relegating Him to a distant heaven. Yet this is the "idea" that is to usurp the throne of the dethroned message of the Incarnation of the Son of God! Yet what a foolish little thing it is beside the great revelation of God's redemptive entrance into our fallen human life in the Son of His love! The God we had expelled returns, not by way of the stars and the universal law of immanence, but by the way of sacrificial love. Instead of the immanence of Nature, in which human sin has run riot, we see the new immanence of Grace, in which sin is antagonised and conquered. How the glory of the Incarnation of God streams out above the small philosophies of men! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Henceforth "He that hath the Son hath life; and He that hath not the Son hath not life."

Consider the unique greatness and sublimity of Christ's message of resurrection power and glory. The hope of immortality is set deep in the heart of man. The deep spiritual instinct of humanity has always looked wistfully beyond the grave, and refused to accept the tomb as the furthest limit of life. Sages, not without success, have sought to test and buttress this hope of immortality with the dialectic of philosophy. Even scientific thought to-day is seeking to break down the walls of the boundary of death, and to add to its investigations the dim vistas of a life beyond. Clearly enough, there is the recognition of high regency for the surest and greatest conception of life and immortality. Who can doubt that, in this respect, He who has brought "life and immortality to light through His Gospel" is for ever unapproachable? In the light of the certainty which He has brought, all other reachings towards immortality seem but shadowy speculation. They gather like dim ghosts around His empty grave, while they join in the cry: "He is not here; He is risen; behold the place where the Lord lay." There immortality and

life put on their shining vestments, and cry to the labouring hopes of men: "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that are asleep."

Also in the resurrection *glory* which He has revealed He can have no rival. Many have been the attempts to give form to the hope of the life to come, and to draw inspiration from the vision of what lies beyond. Sometimes imagination or speculation has peopled the territory beyond death with unreal phantoms or shades, and sometimes with more substantial existences; but the brightest forms have been faint, and the inspiration uncertain. But the risen Christ has invested immortality with glories not obscure, for He Himself has become the type of the resurrection glory of the immortal host that trust in Him. He is "the firstfruits of them that are asleep." He has given a new aspect to the life beyond, turning it from glimmering shadow into enchanting light. Even now "to die is gain," and "to depart and to be with Christ is far better" than the most blessed life of the flesh. But through the brightening perspective the vision grows more concrete and wonderful. We see the Son of Man in His glory coming to take the kingdom of His grace, and to finish His work. His light is brighter than the sun; and we know that that is the likeness into which we shall be changed. Ring all the joy-bells over the weariness

of the flesh! Our resurrection glory breaks clear over the shadows of death. When He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

Jesus reigns also by means of His continued real, although invisible, presence in the world. If ideas rule the world, they rule more potently through a living personal presence. Great is the power of vital and effective personality. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." One finds in these days, as others have doubtless found in other days, that works of the mighty dead are often neglected in favour of inferior and ephemeral works of modern writers. Great dramas of dead dramatists lie on dusty shelves, while eccentric and sensational melodramas or extravaganzas by living fabricators are advertised in glaring capitals all over the land. The words of wisdom which ancient sages taught lie comparatively unnoticed, while the vehement harangues of the ignorant demagogue are hailed as motive forces for the conduct of life. Why is this? Perchance the reasons may be many, but certainly not the least of the many is the potency of a present living personality. The vehement personality, even if petty, has a wizardry which is absent from the greatest book. The ideas of the dead are orphaned and enfeebled by their divorce from the personality which gave them birth. It is said that the dead rule us from their urns. But

they do so only in so far as their ideas are reincarnated in living men, and are made effective by the force of new personality.

Herein lies the sovereignty of Christ, that He remains in the world to give perfect effectiveness to His wonderful message. If it were not so, He could not be sure of His kingdom. We know that the ideas and ideals of all who depart from His message are immeasurably inferior to His; as inferior as the rant of a mob orator is to the luminous wisdom of a Plato. But we know how the spell of personality works, and the inferior teaching plus a driving personality may well overcome the sublimer message, if the personality that gave it life has faded away. It is not sufficient for the assurance of His reign that the teaching of Christ remains; the dynamic of His personality must remain behind His message. It is the mighty preeminence of the power of His personality that gives complete certainty to His sovereignty. The petty personalities that try to usurp His throne will fade into the past, and their small thoughts will perish with them. The petty potentates that seduce the unwary come and go like forest leaves in the restless generations; but above them in unbroken dominion the Son of God continues to give His unchanging message to the world, and to invest it with the glorious potency of His living presence and personality. For He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

This presence of the Christ with us and with His message is fundamental to our faith. It has been said, and truly said, that a cardinal dividing line between faith and unfaith in respect of the evangel of Christ lies in the answer to the question, whether Jesus is but a memory and an influence in the world, or whether He is here in personal presence as our Lord and our God. It is in the latter alternative that His assurance of His kingdom lay. "I will not leave you orphaned; I will come to you." "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world-age." Those who believe in Him know His presence. The world seeth Him no more, but we see Him. It was not by His word alone, but by His personal life that we were apprehended, and called to be His disciples. He is here in and through and with the Holy Spirit whom He sends to convince the world of the Divine sanction and power of His message. When we realise the fellowship of His presence, we gladly become His bond-slaves, and no lesser charm of personality can wean us from His holy truth; for He has become both truth and life to us. It is when the Church fails to realise the vital presence of her Lord that she becomes weak and doubtful. When she clearly realises that He who is her Life is here, giving His word the mighty dynamic of His living presence

and personality, then she knows that, although heaven and earth pass away, His word can never pass away, and that He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet.

II. What is the record and evidence of His reign in history ?

If He is reigning, there must be evidence by this time of the nature and power of His reign. This evidence is not uncertain.

The record of His reign is the record of the creation of the grandest human lives the world has ever seen. The quality of life displayed by Christ's men and women through the Christian centuries is by far the finest thing that has ever been known in the history of the world. I have not the slightest desire to depreciate the noblest characters of heathendom, or to refuse credit to the moral results of the wisdom of heathen sages. On the negative side especially, that is, on the side of stoical abstinence, some very fine traits have been exhibited by the paragons of heathendom. But they who cannot see that the finest type of heathen character, compared with the finest type of Christian character, is as iron to fine gold, have but little discernment for the finer beauties of the human spirit. Place a Seneca or a Marcus Aurelius, with their philosophical and maxim-fed virtues, beside a Paul, with the multitudinous beauties of his new life in Christ, and the endless surprises of his con-

secration and faith and love. This is the height and depth of life, with life's manifold glories and boundless freedom. Here is no mechanical code of philosophy, but divinest energies running in intricate powers and beauties and harmonies through every fibre and vein of the character, ranging from the highest enthusiasms and majesties of superb heroisms to the most delicate thrills of tenderness and love and grace. No one but Christ could have fashioned a Paul. "It is not I that live; but Christ liveth in me."

This power of the Christ to create unparalleled lives has succeeded in the case of the lowest and most debased of mankind. When philosophy has succeeded in making a reputable or admirable moral character, it has always started with a respectable subject. Every man must be born again before He can see God's kingdom, the highest spiritual inheritance of humanity, but many men can be made morally respectable by a slighter process. Still in our fallen world, some are born with a minimum of vicious tendencies, and may under a continuation of good moral influences be highly polished into moral reputability. It is in such characters that philosophy finds the subjects which nourish its pride. It does not pretend to save the vicious, or to lift the depraved and the morally impotent out of the mire. But it is just where philosophy fails that Jesus Christ makes His power

known. He has not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He sends out to the highways and the hedges, and brings in the lame and the halt and the blind to the banquet of His grace. And lo! they are lame and halt and blind no longer, but all receive power to become strong sons of God. He has raised the despicable to sit with princes, and changed the filth of the street into jewelled crowns for His redemptive brow. These are some of the wonders of His reign, wonders which belong to Him alone.

"He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven" is greater than the sage. And over what a wide range of history has Jesus manifested His imperial power of redemption! What a glorious roll of apostles, saints, and martyrs make the Christian generations illustrious! Already we can see a great multitude which no man can number, out of all tribes and peoples and nations and languages and tongues clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands, standing before the throne of God and the Lamb; and we know that they have come up out of the stained and broken life of earth, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. What a galaxy of heroes and heroines might be added to the inspiring roll of the eleventh chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews!

What an endless scroll of the names of those "of whom the world was not worthy"! The sound of their feet is that of a great multitude, and their voice is as the voice of many waters, and they fill the earth with fragrance and beauty, the beauty of holiness and love. What a contrast Christ's multitude of sublime men and women presents to the meagre scroll of the saints of pagan philosophy. It is almost amusing to hear the pagan challenge return again and again under the ægis of the same half-dozen names. Marcus Aurelius and Seneca have been wearied out with having to do duty as the shining examples of the power of philosophy. There is no stock behind the samples. But the same few names are repeated again and again, possibly with the hope that repetition may stand for numbers. The expedient reminds me of a story of a French invasion of the Pembrokeshire coast when the soldiers of the district had been called away to do duty elsewhere. The story goes that an old superannuated general conceived the idea of marching the women of the district round the base of a hill in sight of the Frenchmen, so that the red-shawled Welshwomen might be mistaken for red-coated soldiers, and the endless line marching round the hill might be taken for a considerable army. The story happily reports the complete success of the stratagem. Whatever ground there may or may not be for this story, it affords a good illustration

of the way in which a few names of heathen moralists are marched round and round before us, so as to give us the impression of a company rivalling the glorious fellowship of the sons and daughters of God in Christ Jesus. But we are not deceived. We know the poverty of the land. And we know the abundance of power and grace that are in Jesus Christ. He, having been lifted up from the earth, has been drawing all men unto Him.

Further, the power and message of His reign is the one thing that has remained triumphantly unchanged throughout the generations. This is a marvellous thing. Here is a message of life to men given in essence and in detail in the writings of the New Testament some two thousand years ago. Since it was given, human theories of all kinds have undergone prodigious changes. Science has repudiated its dogmatisms again and again, and is to-day busy repudiating recent conclusions. Philosophy has pursued its devious way, and new philosophers have run amuck in old philosophies, and left them in littered confusion. Social and political ideas have been so completely remodelled that they claim to be not only new, but revolutionary. Thus the great stumbling, changing world has been trying to make all things new, and filling the world with the dust and debris of its continual alterations. Yet, in the midst of all change, the great message of the Gospel of Christ remains substantially un-

changed. It is the same message to-day as when it was first proclaimed to the world in the great forty years after the death of Christ.

I am aware that men talk of changing it, and that there are a few who imagine that they have succeeded in permanently altering it, and in finally attaching the name of Christianity to a new gospel. We can afford to smile at their folly. We look down the vistas of past history, and we find them strewn with the remains of new gospels which were promulgated with the same confidence as the modern gospel. Every attempt to change the message of the Christ will meet the same fate. The maker of another gospel will not supersede Christ, but will himself become anathema. Centuries ago the old Gospel was declared obsolete, yet here am I to-day preaching precisely the same Gospel of the grace of God in the atoning Christ which was preached by Paul to the Corinthians in the first Christian century. I never prophesy unless I know. And because I know, I venture to prophesy here and now that, if our world should be still existent a million years hence, the messengers of Jesus will then be preaching this very Gospel of the cross which I am preaching to you to-day. Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but the message of the Christ to a sinful world remains unchanged for ever.

III. What is the guarantee that He must reign in the days to be ?

He must continue to reign, because His message alone has redeeming power. There is no message to take its place. Man is in need of salvation to the very centre of His being. He is guilty and needs an all-sufficient atonement for his sin. He is a moral failure, and needs to be re-created into life. He is separated from God, and needs a Mediator to bring him into the presence of the Father. There is no adequately redemptive message for the sinner except the wonderful message of the cross. All the boasted schemes of men for the amelioration of humanity only touch the surface of life. There is no other name given under heaven among men by whom we must be saved, neither is there salvation in any other. We cannot do without the dominion of Christ. It is the one hope of our fallen and guilty race.

> "Not the labour of my hands
> Can fulfil Thy law's demands:
> Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin could not atone,
> Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Jesus must continue to reign, because His message appeals to the deepest heart of man. He appeals to the divinest thing in the heart of man, and the divinest appeal is the most persistent and is the mightiest in the long run. This is a great paradox of life, that the depth of the appeal of

Jesus is the reason why so many turn away from Him, and yet is the reason why the world must at length be drawn to Him. His supreme and conquering appeal is from the height—"if I be lifted up"—and yet it is the height which so many refuse to climb, for they do not love the labours of the steep. "This is a hard saying," said some, "who can hear it?" And they turned away from Him. But others said, "To whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Jesus is at grips with man in his deepest nature, and this grip must ultimately win.

I know that the more superficial appeal may seem to win for a time. The world is responding only too readily at the present time to those who appeal to its lusts and passions and self-love and self-interest, and closing its ears to those who call from the high places of consecration and love and self-sacrifice and holy vision. Even so the prodigal son deserted the pure attractions of his Father's house for the land of riotous living. Even so many forsook Jesus and His words of eternal life for the grosser voices of the world. But the divinest voice wins in the long run in this world of redemption. The incarnate Christ is at the heart of humanity, and His power there is sure. The devil may sow confusion in the margin of things, but the centre is in the hands of Christ. The redemptive union of Christ with our race has given the divinest appeal

the ultimate and certain victory. It is this assurance that makes us calm in the midst of the scorn and tumult and perversity of the Christ-rejecting world. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Weary of the lesser voices, the great heart of the world will at length hunger for the Divine message of the Christ. The prodigal world must sooner or later grow weary of the husks of the swine, and, coming to itself, will say: "I will arise and go to my Father." The sublime message of Divine love is the conquering word of the King.

Jesus must reign to the end, because He Himself is coming in visible presence and power to take possession of His kingdom. His kingdom is assured by the continuous development of the dynamic of His Divine personality. First, He established it by His incarnate presence on the earth. Now He continues it by His invisible presence with His people. At last He will complete it by His visible presence in manifested glory. His final presence in glory will be the seal of His power, and the confusion of those who have refused to believe His promise that He will come again to finish His work in the fullness of His glory. Let those consider, who imagine that the personal Saviour has retired from the world He is pledged to redeem. But what difference can there be between the invisible and visible presence? If He is here now, why should He come again? An

illustration may assist thought. We have seen sometimes on one of those perfect summer days with which we are occasionally favoured in England, a lovely cloudless sky. Such days in our island are not frequent; yet I think a perfect English summer day is the most beautiful day the world can show. On such a day, I say, we have seen a blue sky without a cloud. But suddenly, with the cool of the evening, it sometimes happens that clouds seem to spring out of space and cover the face of the sky. Where did they come from? Of course, you know the answer full well. They were present all the day as invisible vapour; and, with the cool of the evening, they suddenly condensed, and became visible to the beholder. This may serve as an analogy. The Lord is with us in His invisible presence all the day of this world-age; but with the eventide He will clothe Himself with the robes of His visible glory, and all the world shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory. This is not less certain than His first coming in the flesh, or than His presence with us to-day.

What will His coming in glory do that His invisible presence has not done, or will not do? We cannot yet fully answer this question, but we may be certain that each phase of the Lord's manifestation will make its own contribution to the sum of His final dominion. It will be the last great act

of His power of redemption and judgment in affirming and developing His kingdom. It will complete the triumph of His reign. His promised coming assures us that He will not leave His kingdom incomplete, or His sovereignty doubtful. I beseech you to hear His voice, and to acknowledge His reign. Let not the vain imaginations of the hour mislead you. For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our God, and of His Christ, and the followers of the Lamb shall become an everlasting priesthood and kingdom unto God. The world's vain voices shall be stilled, but this glad cry shall be heard for ever: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever, and ever. Amen."

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